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MASJID AL-AQSA PALESTINE

SPECIAL EDITION

See back page for QUNOOT-E-NAAZILAH!

THE SOUND THAT ECHOES AROUND THE GLOBE

Azaan

Azaan: An incredible medium for the proclamation of Tawheed of Almighty Allah and Risaalat of Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam,the sound of which constantly echoes around the globe.

Amazing though it sounds, but fortunately for the Muslims of the world,it is an established fact. Have a look at a map of the world and you will find Indonesia (an Islamic country) right on the eastern side of the earth's central land mass. Indonesia consists of numerous small islands, the principle ones amongst them being Java, Sumatra, Borneo and Saibil, all of which are well known. It is the largest country in the world, with 180 million inhabitants. The number of non-Muslims here is negligible.

As soon as dawn breaks on the eastern side of Saibil, at proximately 5:30 am local time, Fajar Azaan begins. Thousands of Muazzins in eastern Indonesia commence proclaiming the Tawheed(oneness) of the Almighty, Omnipotent and Omniscient Allah and Risaalat (Universal Apostleship) of the Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam.

The process then continues and advances towards the Western Islands of Indonesia. The time difference between the eastern and western islands of Indonesia is one and a half hours. Hence, one and a half hours after the Azaan has been completed in Saibil, it echoes in Jakarta on Java island.

Sumatra then follows suit and before this auspicious process of calling Azaan ends in Indonesia, it has already begun in Malaysia. Burma is next in line, and within an hour of its commencement in Jakarta, it reaches Dacca,the capital city of Bangladesh. No sooner the calling of Azaan ends in Bangladesh, it has already prevailed in western India, from Calcutta to Srinagar. It then advances towards Bombay and the environment of entire India resounds with this august proclamation.

Srinagar and Sialkot (a city in north Pakistan) have the same timing for Azaan. The time difference between Sialkot, Kota, Karachi and Gowadar (a city in Baluchistan, a province of Pakistan) is forty minutes, and within this time, Fajar Azaan is heard throughout Pakistan. Before it ends there, however, it has already begun in Afghanistan and Muscat. The time difference between Muscat and Baghdad is one hour. Azaan resounds during this one hour In the environments of Hijaaz-e-Muqaddas (Holy cities of Makkah and Madinah), Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Iraq.

The time difference between Baghdad and Alexandria in Egypt is again one hour. Azaan continues to resound in Syria, Egypt, Somalia and Sudan during this hour. Alexandria and Istanbul are situated on the same geographical longitude. The time difference between eastern and western Turkey is one and a half hours, and during this time it is echoed with the call to prayer.

Alexandria and Tripoli (capital of Libya) are located at a hour difference from one another. The process of calling Azaan thus continues throughout the whole of Africa. Therefore, the roclamation of the Oneness of Allah and the Prophethood of Muhammad Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam that had begun in the eastern islands of Indonesia reaches the Eastern Shore of the Atlantic ocean after nine and a half hours.

Prior to the Azaan reaching the shores of the Atlantic, the process of Zohar Azaan has already commenced in eastern Indonesia, and before it reaches Dacca, Asar Azaan has started. This has hardly reached Jakarta one and half hours later, then the time of Maghrib becomes due, and no sooner has Maghrib time reached Sumatra, then the time for calling Isha Azaan has commenced in Saibil! When the Muazzins of Indonesia are calling out Fajar Azaan, the Muazzins in Africa are calling out the Azaan for Isha.
If we were to ponder over this phenomenon seriously and studiously, we would conclude the amazing fact that there is not a single moment when few thousands if not hundreds of thousands of Muazzins around the world are not proclaiming the Oneness of Almighty Allah and the Apostleship of the noble Prophet Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam on the surface of this earth!

Inshah Allah! This universal and continuous calling of the Azaan shall not cease untill the Day of the Judgement, we should all make necessary effort & du'a for the same .

The following is Mustahab on Eid's Day:

- To trim the nails
- To have a bath
- To brush the teeth with a Miswaak
- To wear nice clothing- preferably new, if not, then freshly washed clothing
- To use Attar (scent)
- To perform Fajr Salaah in the Masjid
- To pay Fitra before the Eid Salaah
- To walk to the Masjid or Eid Gah in one route and to return on another
- To eat dates or something sweet before going for the Eid Salaah
- To express joy and donate generously
- To recite the Takbeer on route to the Eid Gah or Masjid

اَللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ اَللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّااللّٰهُ وَاللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ ط
اَللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ وَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ ط

Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar. Laa Illaha Illalahu
Wal Laahu Akbar. Allahu Akbar Wa Lillahil Hamd

"Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest. There is none worthy of worship besides Allah and Allah is the Greatest and to Allah belongs all Praise.

The Eid Salaah

The Eid Salaah is Waajib upon every person on whom the Jummah Salaah is Waajib. There are only two Rakaats in the Eid Salaah. These two Rakaats are offered as an expression of thanks to the Almighty Allah for giving us the strength, courage Taufeeq to keep fast, perform Taraweeh and I'tikaf etc. during the Mubarak month of Ramadhaan. This is also where Allah rewards us for our fast, patience and sacrifices.

نَوَيْتُ اَنْ اُصَلِّيَ لِلّٰهِ تَعَالٰى رَكْعَتَيْنِ مَعَ سِتَّةِ تَكْبِيْرَاتٍ
صَلٰوةَ عِيْدِالْفِطْرِ اِقْتَدَيْتُ بِهٰذَاالْاِمَامِ مُتَوَجِّهًا
اِلٰى جِهَةِ الْكَعْبَةِ الشَّرِيْفَةِ ط

Niyah- Intention

Before beginning the Eid Salaah, ensure that you have Wudhu. Say the Niyah as follows:

Nawaytu an usalliya Lillahi Ta'aala Rak'ataini ma'a Sittati Takbeeraati Salaata Eidil Fitri Iqtadaytu Behaazal Imaami Mutawajjihan Ila Jihatil Ka'batish Shareefah.

"Oh Allah I am performing two Rakaats Eid-ul-Fitr Salaah with six extra Takbeers for You, as a follower behind this Imam facing towards the Holy Ka'bah.

Method of the Eid Salaah

After the Imam says the first Takbeer (Takbeer-e-Tahreema), recite Thanaa (SubhanakAllah Humma). Thereafter the Imam will say three extra Takbeers, raising the hands to the ears each time and releasing them to your side after the first and second extra Takbeers. Now, after the third extra Takbeer, fold and place your hands below the navel. The Imam will read Surah Fatiha and a Surah and complete the Rakaat in the usual manner.

In the second Rakaat after Surah Fatiha and the Surah, before going into Ruku, the Imam will say three extra Takbeers, raising your hands to the ear and releasing them to the sides each time. Thereafter, the Imam will say Allahu Akbar and go into Ruku, complete the Salaah in the usual manner.

After the Salaah the Imam will make a Duaa, and deliver a Khutba. There is no Azaan nor Iqaamah for the Eid Salaah.

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Masjid Al-Aqsa

A favourite of the Awliyaa

Masjid al-Aqsa has always been a magnet for the lovers and friends of Allah (SWT), and those seeking renunciation of the world.

Chronicle mention a myriad of illustrious personalities from the earliest Muslim generaions who connected themselves to the Masjid.

In his meeting with Sayyidina Umar □, Uways al-Qarnī □ reportedly expressed a desire to offer Salah at Masjid al-Aqsa. The Caliph made thorough preparations for him and his dream was realised.

During his time at al-Aqsa, Sufyaan ath Thawri □, the great Muhadith and jurist, completed a recitation of the Qur ān at the Dome of the Rock. He was seen purchasing a banana for one Dirham in the Holy City. After eating it in the shadow of the Rock, he turned to his companion and said, "When a donkey finishes its fodder, it increases its work." He then stood up and performed a great amount of Salah.

Ascetics and people of Tasawwuf were fascinated with Masjid al-Aqā, viewing it as a key nexus between Heaven and earth. Just as the Prophet □ ascended from the Masjid on the night of Mi rāj, they viewed a presence at the Masjid as being beneficial to spiritual ascendance.

The Sufi Bishr ibn al-Harith al Haafi □□ was asked, "Why do the pious get happy at Baytul Muqaddas?" He replied, "Because it dispels their worries and the ego does not rise and become arrogant in it."

He was also asked, "What remains with you of the pleasures of the world?" Bishr □ replied, "To lie down on my side beneath the sky in the Jami of Baytul Muqaddas."

The renowned ascetic Ibrahim bin al Adham □, who had renounced his Kingdom and migrated to al-Shaam, would sleep near the Rock at al-Aqā during his spiritual visits to al-Quds. He was even imprisoned for a while in the city after he had told a guard that he was a "runaway slave". He was subsequently released after protests against his incarceration from the people of al-Quds and his clarification that he meant that he was a slave of the Almighty running away from his sins.

He once advised some contemporaries to proceed to the Holy Land. Gesturing towards Bayt al-Maqdis, he referred to it as mountains "where you cannot do any evil".

Rabia al-Adawiyyah (Rabia Basriyyah□), the famous Sufiyah, also fled to al-Shaam, choosing it as a place for spiritual seclusion. She spent a good portion of her later life in worship in al-Quds. There is a shrine claimed to be her grave on the famous Mount of Olives near Masjid al-Aqsa.
Dhunun Misri□ recounted his observations at the Masjid as follows: "On the Rock of Jerusalem
I have found the sinner estranged; the one obedient to Allah □exhilarated; the frightened fleeing; the hopeful entreating [Allah]; the contented rich; and the lover submissive."

It is narrated of Sirī al-Saqati □ of Baghdad that during the course of his stay at al-Aqsa he was once resting and stretched his leg into the Mihrab. He heard a voice reprimanding him for acting in a way kings would. Upon that he pledged never to do it again.
Imam al-Ghazali □ also travelled to Bilad al-Shaam for a ten year period of seclusion and devotion to Allah □ and found the inner certainty he had sought. He lived in al-Quds for a significant period, passed through Baghdad and visited Makkah for Hajj. Eventually he returned to his birthplace of Tus and remained there, dedicated to worship and teaching.
At al-Aqsa, Imam al-Ghazali stayed in a room above the Bab al-Rahmah, In his moments of solitude there, he began penning his most celebrated work, the Ihya 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of Religious Sciences)

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RAMADAAN IN IN JERUSALEM

BY FAIZEL KAMKER

The global ummah always welcomes the month of Ramadaan with hope and anticipation. Indeed, for the billions of Muslims around the globe this is a month of blessings and heightened acts of worship. In this month it is anticipated that human dignity and the respect to allow the masses the right to worship will be respected. This would include the right not to be harassed, to peace and safety for allowing the acts of worship to be conducted in an environment free of oppressiveness and harm. Palestine is no different in expecting that this should apply to them as well. At the start of this blessed month in welcoming Ramadaan the streets of Jerusalem around Masjidul Aqsa were filled with happiness and hope and this was symbolised with the lighting up of the streets.

The Israeli authorities and the illegal settler community of the West Bank however callously went against this basic rights expected by any person and shattered the above dreams and hopes. On the night of the 26th Ramadaan the Israeli forces without any provocation attacked those that were attending prayers at Masjidul Aqsa with rubber coated bullets, sound bombs and tear gas. Simultaneously they attacked the sound room and cut of the sound system. In excess of two hundred people were injured and a number of deaths resulted from this attack which in reality is a continuation of a programme of genocide. The retaliation by throwing stones, shoes and other objects, all of which are not classified as weapons, is a natural reaction and despite the spin around this by the Israeli Authorities and its media poodles only the intellectually bankrupt can use that as an excuse to justify the cold hearted attack. When the European Union said: "the perpetrators on both sides must be held accountable" we are left to ponder on the agenda of these political leaders.

What caused this dastardly attack? A neighbourhood in East Jerusalem called Sheikh Jarrah was placed under extreme pressure when Israeli settlers made an unjustified claim to property belonging to Palestinians as theirs. This matter is on the court roll for a legal ruling to be delivered. The claim is based on what the internationally community recognised as an illegal act enacted in Israel where residency rights can be revoked. This unjust claim has led to peaceful protest actions which in turn led to unjustified counter reactions by those in favour of the claim knowing full well that this claim is illegal on the basis of international law as expounded by the resolutions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The baseless counter reaction led to reactions countering that and this then allowed the pretext to the attack on the worshippers of Al Aqsa Masjid. The above summary clearly outlines the fact that no justification existed for the attack. It is no wonder that the United Nations on their comment on this issue stated: "Israel should call of any evictions and employ maximum restraint in the use of force".

The inhumaneness and injustice is so blatant that even the blinded poodles of Israel such as the United Sates and some Arab states could not even implicitly come to the side of Israel when they openly condemned the action of the Israeli authorities in this area of military rule.

In a month where worship takes precedence, how can acts of worship be concentrated on when there is the threat of becoming homeless, or being unjustifiably attacked in a brutal manner and when unwarranted detention and arrests becomes the order of the day. We are in fact witnessing a situation of an attack on religious activity. The culmination of the month of Ramadaan is the day of Eidul Fitr. What joy can be expressed by children who had to see this day without their parents on their side, parents who are languishing in jail despite not having committed a crime or those parents who are in hospital suffering from injuries because of the continued policies of apartheid and genocide or having been murdered by the state. In a month of "brotherhood" we should all stand up and make our voices heard at this injustice. Silence on this matter can be interpreted as an act deprived of mercy and such an act cannot expect the reciprocating of receiving of mercy.

MASJID AL-AQSA: TIMELINE OF SOME MAJOR ATTACKS

1967

Israel occupies Masjid al-Aqsa in wake of the Six Day War. Israeli commander Mordechai Gur makes the infamous declaration: "HarHaBayitBeYadeinu" ("The Temple Mount is in our hands"). Masjid al-Aqsa is initially closed off completely to Muslims, then re-opened. Israel forces install themselves outside Masjid perimeter. Occuaption takes charge of Buraq Wall and demolishes Magharibahneighborhood in its vicinity

1969

An Australian Christian Zionist, Dennis Rohan, sets Masjid Al-Aqsa on fire, completely destroying large parts of the Qibli Masjid, including the Mimbar of Salahudeen. Israeli forces are accused of complicity in the attack.

1990

Twenty Palestinians are killed inside Masjid al-Aqsa, with more than 150 people injured after Zionist zealots attempt to place the "cornerstone" of the Temple they seek to establish at Masjid al-Aqsa.

1996

More than 70 Palestinians are killed in the wake of protests after Israel opens up a tunnel beneath Masjid al-Aqsa.

2000

Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon makes a provocative visit to Masjid al-Aqsa stoking the Intifada wherein thousands of Palestinians are to be killed.

2017

After attack on Israeli policemen, three Palestinians from 1948 lands are killed inside al-Aqsa, and the Masjid is completely shut for almost three days, including Jummuah. Israeli forces raid all structures at the mosque, and subsequently install metal detectors and cameras outside the Masjid, resulting in a popular boycott. Israel is forced to back down on the new control measures.

FIRST QIBLAH

Masjid al-Aqsa was the Qiblah of the Muslims for the entire pre-Hijrah period in MakkatulMukarammah, as well as for 16-17 months after the Hijrah in MadinatulMunawarrah.

SECOND

Al-Aqsa is the s
established on
after the
subsequently
Ambiya (AS) th

MASJID AL-AQSA: MY RESPONSIBILITY

VISIT

Sayyidina Abu Hurairah(RA) narrates: "The Messenger of Allah SAW said: "Do not deliberately set out on a journey[for the purpose of worship] but to three mosques: the Masjid al Haram[in Makkah], al Masjid al Aqsa[in Jerusalem], and my Masjid[in Madinah]'"[Bukhari]

Salaah at Masjid al Aqsa is valued 500 times more than Salaah performed anywhere else, with the exception of Makkah and Madinah. The virtue of performing I'tikaaf here is similarly more meritorious. Likewise, great virtues have been mentioned for donning Ihram for Hajj/Umrah from Masjid al Aqsa.

CONTRIBUTE

SayyidatinaMaymuna(RA) reported: I said: 'O Messenger of Allah(SAW), tell us about Bait al Maqdis'. He said: 'It is the place of Judgement Day where everyone will be called. Come and pray in it, for one prayer in it is like one thousand prayers elsewhere'. 'What is one cannot go there?' I asked. He replied, 'Send oil for its lamps; for whoever does so, it is as if they went there'" (IbnMajah)

PRAY

Dua is the essence of Ibadah (worship), and according to other Ahadeeth it is itself Ibadah. It is also the weapon of the believer. Utilise it to beseech Allah for the protection and liberation of Masjid al Aqsa and the well-being of its people.

EDUCATE

Read authentic books on Masjid al-Aqsa. Keep abreast of the latest news from Masjid al-Aqsa, and share it with others. Attend and organise educational sittings on the Masjid. Include it in school and madrasah curricula.

TAKE ACTION

Become an ambassador for Masjid al-Aqsa. Make its wellbeing and liberation your personal responsibility. Initiate and be part of campaigns to effect meaningful change at the First Qiblah.

D MASJID

second Masjid to be earth, just 40 years Ka'bah. It was rebuilt by various roughout history.

THIRD HOLIEST SITE

The most prestigious Masjid after Masjid al-Haram and Masjid an-Nabawi (SAW). Salaah is rewarded 500+ times more here than a regular Masjid.

Battleground Al-Aqsa

Ebrahim Moosa – Palestine Information Network (PIN)

The concluding days of Ramadan 1442 saw a vicious assault on musallees at Masjid al-Aqsa, with Israeli occupation forces making brazen armed incursions into the heart of the Masjid, shooting at worshippers, embarking on an arrest campaign and damaging Masjid property.

"Ramadan in Al-Quds is different" is a slogan Jerusalemites have popularised in recent years, expressing the longing Palestinians in al-Quds have for Ramadan, due to the beautiful flavour it brings to the city. Ramadan witnesses an influx in visitors to the Palestinian capital from across the West Bank and historic Palestine. There are awe-inspiring Taraweehs and Jummuahs, poignant duas, and picturesque family iftaars in the shade of the Dome of the Rock. The month also brings a much needed financial injection to the markets of Al-Quds, whose traders have for a long time borne the brunt of heavy Israeli taxation, their situation only exacerbated over the past year by crippling COVID-19 lockdowns.

Ramadan in al-Quds is different because it offers Jerusalemites a break from the stranglehold of Occupation, and the opportunity, for some moments, to have a taste of freedom.

Ever sure to sour the flavour, the Occupation began this Ramadan by placing metal barriers in the Bab al-Amoud area, thereby ruining a popular social rendezvous for Palestinians. When Palestinians resisted these restrictions, Israeli police responded with the language of violence, sparking pandemonium on the streets of Al-Quds. When they were ultimately forced to back down on the measures due to popular pressure, Israeli forces then shifted the arena of provocation to Masjid al-Aqsa itself.

On the final Friday of Ramadan, with an imposing crowd of 70 000 worshippers, many of whom had stayed on after a glorious Jummuah Salaah, the Occupation attacked the Masjid whilst Taraweeh Salaah was in progress. Chaotic scenes ensued as worshippers sought to dodge the volleys of tear gas, rubber coated metal bullets and sound bombs. Scores were injured and the Masjid was off bounds for hours. Most brazen were the attacks on a clinic at the Masjid as well as on journalists covering the events.

It was a scene to be repeated with yet greater intensity in the following days, when the Qibli Musallah, Dome of the Rock, and Bab ar-Rahmah at the Masjid were all besieged. Employing a similar arsenal, the Palestinian defenders of al-Aqsa on the receiving end experienced suffocation, and most of the injuries recorded involved shots to the head, eyes and chest. The Occupation prevented the evacuation of the injured, and there were impassioned pleas for help from the minarets of Al-Aqsa.

Israeli forces sought to empty the area of Muslims to enable a settler incursion into the Masjid on the occasion of the Israeli Jerusalem Day. There was a spirited fight back from Palestinian murabiteen, and both the settler march and the police onslaught was forced to back-off.

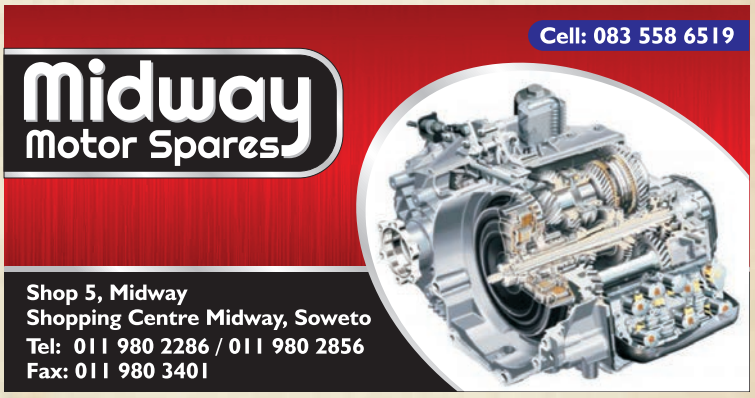
Images of the aftermath of the Israeli attacks underscore the gravity of the Occupation crimes committed this Ramadan. Munition shells littered the arena of the Mi'raj, windows were broken, and stones and debris covered the Masjid carpets. At one point, a large tree at Al-Aqsa even caught on fire sparking serious concern of damage to the Masjid.

The Zionist regime showed particular brazenness by mounting these attacks in the concluding days of Ramadan, and this too whilst Salaah was underway.

The scenes of an Aqsa literally on fire, and the haunting cries of Waa Islamaa and Ayna Salahudeen from the Masjid represented a major blight on the conscience of an Ummah that was unable to defend its third holiest site at an hour of peril.

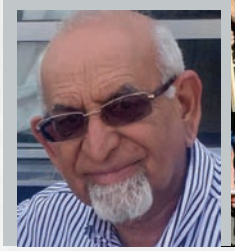
The events presently gripping Al-Aqsa, Sheikh Jarrah and Bab al-Amoud are a fight for the heart and the soul of Palestine, and a litmus test for the Muslim World's solidarity with the oppressed. Who will rise to support the guardians of our first qiblah?

Follow updates from Masjid al-Aqsa on @firstqiblah on social media



Lawfare Results in Resounding Victories for Palestinian Solidarity Movements

Iqbal Jassat



2021 kicked off astoundingly well for South Africa's broadbased Palestinian solidarity movements. If what they notched up in a series of groundbreaking results in defence of Palestine's freedom struggle during the first quarter of the year, it certainly heralds more favourable changes.

In the first matter, a weekly Jewish paper has been found by the country's highest media regulatory authority to be in violation of it's press codes and directed to apologise.

The offence by the Jewish Report occurred when it carried a report based on a cartoon published by a trade union GIWUSA and subsequently republished by the SA BDS Coalition on its Facebook page. The cartoon which depicted a greedy person gulping money - a traditional capitalist, was in relation to the country's milk distributor Clover having been taken over by an Israeli conglomerate linked to settlement activities, facing strikes by workers over labour disputes.

The report made a number of damning allegations against SA BDS Coalition including slanderous claims of antisemitism. On behalf of a constituent member, the Palestine Solidarity Alliance represented by unionist and human rights activist Hassen Lorgat, made a compelling argument against the paper's injudicious report. Though contested by the Jewish Report to justify it's stance, the Press Ombudsman was not convinced and ruled against it.

Expectedly the paper resorted to seeking leave to appeal the judgment but it fell flat. Once again Lorgat in a comprehensive basis argued successfully to have the appeal set aside. The appeal division led by a high court judge dismissed the application and held that the judgement stands.

Again as expected, the Jewish Report has resorted to delaying tactics by seeking a legal review of the judgement. It demonstrates a reluctance to acknowledge that branding the SA BDS Coalition as antisemitic was wrong.

The second issue arises from a webinar hosted by the Jerusalem Post which featured South Africa's Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng alongside the country's Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein. As perceived by many, this Hasbara (propaganda) event in support of Israel, backfired leaving eggs on the faces of the hosts and its organisers.

CJ Mogoeng went overboard in his misplaced "love" for Israel by crossing the line into the territory of "political controversy" in breach of the Judicial Conduct of which he is supposedly the guardian.

Unrepentant and brazenly defiant, despite being aware of the storm he created in both political and judicial circles, he added to his misfortune by more misguided rhetoric.

Solidarity movements Africa4Palestine, SA BDS Coalition as well as the Women's Cultural Group lodged complaints against Mogoeng's controversial public utterances. They called for a probe into his conduct and having investigated his damaging attacks on boycott, divestment and sanctions as well as on government's foreign policy, the Judicial Conduct Committee (JCC) found against him.

In a thorough and extensive judgement Mogoeng Mogoeng has been severely criticised for flouting the Judicial Code and ordered to issue an apology. However in keeping with the reluctance of the Jewish Report to apologise, the Chief Justice has opted to delay the punishment he has to endure by seeking a review of the judgement.

The third important landmark judgement is against a private theatre in Cape Town. Known as the Labia cinema, it's owners have for close onto a decade refused to screen a film on Palestine. But for the tenacity of the applicants Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC), who valiantly persevered in seeking legal redress, Labia would have remained obstinate.

The judgement makes a fascinating study for all lawfare activists and students seeking a career in law. Straddling across the defence arguments which amongst others held on to narrow paradigms, the legal team representing the PSC made a solid case. The judgement in favour of the solidarity movement has far reaching positive consequences for the advocacy of Palestinian rights.

These findings which in essence reject a collective of faulty legal arguments usually advanced by Israeli lobbyists, have given a huge boost for solidarity movements and human rights organisations across all sectors of civil society.

More importantly by rejecting the merits of a much abused canard of antisemitism, the freedom to be critical of IsraelI policies has reassured elements of the media: don't be intimidated.

Knee jerk responses to taint critics of gross human rights atrocities perpetrated by Israel as Jew-haters, Holocaust deniers and antisemites, will not be tolerated is the message of the solidarity movements.

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Importance of visiting Masjid al-Aqsa

Of the responsibilities of Muslims towards Masjid al-Aqsa, one of the most critical is visiting this blessed Masjid. These are some key reasons why a visit to Masjid al-Aqsa should be on our bucket lists:

1. A Sunnah and source of reward

Visiting Masjid al-Aqsa is a duty is emphasised in the Ahadeeth:

Sayyidah Maymunah bint Sa'd ﷺ relates that she asked the Prophet ﷺ, "O Prophet ﷺ! Inform us about Bayt al-Maqdis"? He said, "Visit it for prayer". She further asked, "If one of us cannot visit it, what should we do"? He said, "If you cannot go for prayer then send some oil to be used in its lamps; whosoever gives oil for its lamps, will be as if he has prayed in it". (Musnad Imam Ahmed)

Visiting is a responsibility that exists for Muslims irrespective of whether adverse political conditions or oppression reign at al-Aqsa or not. The primary reason for such visits is to please Allah ﷻ and accrue the spiritual rewards promised for performing Salaah here.

Sayyidina Abu Hurayrah ﷺ relates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "You should not undertake a special journey to visit any place other than the three Masajid with the expectations of getting greater reward: the Sacred Masjid of Makkah, this Masjid of mine, and Masjid al-Aqsa". (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Sayyidina Abu Darda ﷺ relates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "A prayer in Makkah is worth 100000 times, a prayer in my Masjid (Madinah) is worth 1000 times, and a prayer in al-Aqsa is worth 500 times more than anywhere else". (Tabarani)

Visiting al-Aqsa is also encouraged for the purpose of using it as a station from which to embark upon Hajj or Umrah:

Umm Salamah, Umm al-Mu'minin ﷺ , relates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "If anyone puts on ihram for Hajj or 'Umrah from the Masjid al-Aqsa and then proceeds to the sacred Masjid, his former and latter sins will be forgiven, or he will be guaranteed Paradise". The narrator 'Abdullah doubted which of these words he said. (Sunan Abu Dawud)

A Hadith mentions certain special duas Sayyidina Sulaymaan ﷺ made whilst reconstructing Masjid al-Aqsa, whose blessings even contemporary visitors can share in:

Sayyidina Abdullah ibnAmr ﷺ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Sulaymaan, son of Dawood) prayed for three things from Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, when constructing Bayt al-Maqdis: (i) the ability to decide cases in accordance to the Will of Allah, which was granted to him; (ii) a kingdom the like of which would be given to no one after him, which was also granted; and (iii), after finishing the construction of the masjid he prayed, 'May anyone who comes to this masjid solely for the purpose of praying in it be delivered from all his sins as on the day his mother gave birth to him'" (Nasa'i)

It is narrated of SayyidinaIbn Umar ﷺ that, in pursuit of the rewards mentioned in the aforementioned Hadith, upon completion of his devotions at al-Aqsa, he would not even drink the water of al-Quds or engage in any further activity there for fear of exceeding the conditions specified.

Motivated by a desire to earn these rewards and derive benefit from its blessedness, Masjid al-Aqsa was frequented by numerous Sahabah ﷺ and has played host to many saintly personalities and general Muslim worshippers through the ages.

2. Showing solidarity with the Palestinians

Sayyidina Nu'manibn Basheer ﷺ reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The parable of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Masjid al-Aqsa is the focal point of the Palestinian struggle against dispossession, occupation and apartheid, and Palestinians – especially Jerusalemites – are the first line of defence for the Masjid. It is a common sentiment of Palestinians that the best means for fellow Muslims to assist them is to visit Masjid al-Aqsa and wider Palestine.

Such visits expose the traveller to the realities of Occupation and provide the impetus to become an ambassador for the cause upon returning to one's home country. Critically it is a means of conveying to Palestinians that they are not alone in the struggle to maintain the Holy City's authentic identity. These visits lift their spirits and spur them on to continue resisting and yearning for justice.

Palestinians, especially Jerusalemites, also find themselves under great financial strain due to the policies of Occupation. Visiting is a golden opportunity to support the local Palestinian economy as well as to contribute to Masjid al-Aqsa and its people.

3. Warding off danger and maintaining a Muslim presence

Al-Aqsa fi Khatar (Al-Aqsa is in Danger) is not simply a slogan, but the daily reality facing the Masjid. Al-Aqsa faces plans to divide it spatially between Muslims and Jews. There are also suggestions to apportion specific prayer times for Muslims and Jews within the compound. Beyond this, the Zionist Temple Movement ultimately seeks to destroy structures at Masjid al-Aqsa and extend full control of the site in order to establish a Temple.

To complement this vision, settlers are now making provocative visits seeking to assert ownership of al-Aqsa in ever increasing numbers almost every day. 2015 Israeli Police statistics showed that Jewish visitation to al-Aqsa increased some 92 percent since 2009.

A record number of Jewish settlers have been making provocative visits to al-Aqsa over Jewish holiday periods, reflecting dramatic year-on-year increases.

An Israeli attorney who works with the Temple Movement recently stated that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu will have to approve prayer for Jews at al-Aqsa when their number of visitors surpasses 100 000 a year. This means no more than 300 Jews on average each day.

Concurrently, Palestinian visitation to al-Aqsa continues to be severely curtailed by Israel with authorities only allowing Muslims meeting very narrow criteria in terms of age, gender and residency status to enter. Palestinians who live barely a few minutes or kilometres away from Masjid al-Aqsa may never get to enter the Masjid in their lifetimes.

The Apartheid Wall, expanding Jewish settlements, house demolitions, banning orders, permits and checkpoints too are together keeping yet more Palestinians out. And in the wake of the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, legislation, demographic engineering and archaeological efforts to erase Muslim heritage from al-Aqsa are now all proceeding at break-neck speed.

Since such a limited number of Palestinians are allowed to visit al-Aqsa and hardly any Muslims from the Arab World are able to visit, a special responsibility is consequently placed on Muslims from South Africa, the United Kingdom, Turkey and other Muslim-minority countries to visit, in order to uphold a Muslim presence particularly in al-Quds and al-Aqsa. From South Africa, no visas are required and travel arrangements can be made easily.

Visiting entails one simply travelling to the Masjid, enjoy its spiritual fruits and interacting with its people! Being a holder of a foreign passport and a peaceful traveller largely immunises one from any adversarial encounters with soldiers of authorities.

Performing I'tikaaf in Ramadan at Masjid al-Aqsa is a truly memorable experience that is open to all. Beyond Ramadan, visitation is required throughout the year – from families, youth, Ulama, Umrah travellers, researchers, professionals and more.

Visiting Masjid al-Aqsa is a responsibility we should all take seriously. More than much else, what al-Aqsa needs right now is simply our presence!

May Allah ﷻ increase our love and yearning for Masjid al-Aqsa. May He allow us all to visit its blessed environs before our deaths. May He ease the suffering of its people. And may we see its freedom in our lifetime. Aameen

ISRAELI ACTION AT AL AQSA COULD BE WAR CRIMES

BY FAKIR HASSEN

The unprecedented assault of Palestinians at Al Aqsa, the third holiest shrine in Islam, continued unabated on the Holy Night of Laylatul-Qadr, as the world condemned the action and the plans by Israel to dispossess Palestinians of their homes where they have lived for generations.

At the time of going to print, more than 200 Palestinians had been wounded as the Israeli forces in occupied East Jerusalem fired rubber-coated metal bullets, tear gas and stun grenades at the Palestinians who had tried to demonstrate peacefully.

The attack started on the final Friday of Ramadan as tens of thousands of worshippers packed out the mosque for prayers and then remained behind to protest against Israel's plans to evict Palestinian families to resettle Jewish families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem.

The United Nations has decried the action, saying that the forced evictions could amount to "war crimes".

"We wish to emphasise that East Jerusalem remains part of the occupied Palestinian territory, in which international humanitarian law applies. The occupying power cannot confiscate private property in occupied territory," said UN spokesman Rupert Colville said.

Colville added that resettling any civilian populations into occupied territory was illegal under international law and "may amount to war crimes".

Iran also called it a war crime.

"This war crime once again proved to the world the criminal nature of the illegitimate Zionist regime," said Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh as he called on the UNand other related international institutions to act on their definite duty to "confront this war crime."

Most of the Muslim world has strongly condemned the action, while condemnation from the West has been largely muted.

The Qatar foreign ministry said the action was a "provocation to the feelings of millions of Muslims around the world, and a severe violation of human rights and international accords".

Turkey said Israel was unleashing terror on innocent Palestinians, simultaneously decrying those countries whowere remaining silent on the issue.

"Saudi Arabia rejects Israel's plans and measures to evict dozens of Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem and impose Israeli sovereignty over them," Saudi Arabia's ministry of foreign affairs said.

Even the UAE, which stunned its neighbours last year by normalising relations with Israel, which were brokered by former US President Donald Trump, came out strongly.

"The UAE stresses the need for Israeli authorities to assume their responsibilities – in line with international law – to provide necessary protection to Palestinian civilians' right to practice their religion, and to prevent practices that violate the sanctity of the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque," it said in a statement.

Egypt, Pakistan, Kuwait, and Jordan have also issued strong condemnation of the action.

The European Union, Russia and the US, continuing their efforts to remain neutral, called on both sides to exercise calm, although the US did consider the Israeli seizure a move to increase the tension.

"It's critical to avoid unilateral steps that would exacerbate tensions or take us further away from peace. And that would include evictions, settlement activity, and home demolitions," US State Department spokeswoman Jalina Porter said.

South Africa has issued a very strong condemnation of the Israeli aggression.

"We would like to reiterate that Israel's actions are in stark violation of international law, also a disregard of international humanitarian law and UN Security Council Resolutions, including Resolutions 446 (1979) and 2334 (2016).

"The latter Resolution explicitly calls for an end to Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and the fulfilment of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence," the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) said in a statement.

"It is perplexing that during these unprecedented times, as the international community addresses the global challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, Israel is exploiting the situation to advance its de facto annexation of Palestinian land.

"These acts are not only illegal but also risk undermining the viability of a negotiated two-state solution and will have negative consequences on the entire peace process," the statement added.

The statement reiterated South Africa's position on the Palestinian issue.

"South Africa is unequivocally committed to and values efforts aimed at reviving a political process, leading to the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, existing side by side in peace with Israel within internationally recognised borders, based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in compliance with all relevant UN Resolutions, international law and internationally agreed parameters."

It also strongly supported the view that any peace plan should not allow Palestinian statehood to devolve into an entity devoid of sovereignty, territorial contiguity, and economic viability.

"In this regard, a solution must be premised on a just settlement with just laws that is rights-based and that facilitates equality and equity for all who have a right to live in the territories of Israel and Palestine. This includes sovereign equality between States," the DIRCO statement concluded.

While the apartheid-era white minority government was a strong supporter of Israel, the ANC-led government has been pro-Palestine since 1994.

Even before Nelson Mandela ascended to the Presidency in that year, he had expressed the often-quoted strong view that South Africa's freedom could not be complete without the freedom of the people of Palestine.

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QUNOOT-E-NAAZILAH

FOR MASJID AL AQSA AND PALESTINE

Qunoote Naazilah is a special Du'aa, which is made at a time of severe crisis or calamity, which has befallen the Muslim Ummah. The Qunoote Naazilah can also be recited when the Muslims are afflicted with natural disasters such as epidemics, earthquakes, etc.

TRANSLATION

O Allah! Guide us among those whom You have guided, and grant us protection among those whom You have protected. Befriend us among those whom You have befriended. Grant us blessings in that which You have given us, and save us from the evil which You have ordained. For surely, You decree matters and no one decrees over You. Indeed the one whom You befriend will never be dishonoured, and the one with whom You have enmity will never be honoured. You are Most Blessed our Lord and You are Most Exalted. We seek Your forgiveness and turn towards You in repentance. And may Allah send salutations upon the most honourable Prophet. O Allah! Grant respect to Islam and the Muslims. O Allah! Assist Islam and the Muslims. O Allah! Help Islam and the Muslims. Fulfill Your promise (for You have said in the Qur'aan) "It is Our duty to help the believers." O Allah! Create love among the hearts of the believers, set their affairs straight, and aid them against Your enemies and their enemies. O Allah! Destroy the unbelievers, who prevent people from the path of Your religion, reject Your Messengers, and who fight against Your friends. O Allah! Create disunity in their cause and let their feet tremble. O Allah! Split their unity and destroy their cities. O Allah! Instill fear into their hearts. O Allah! Bring down upon them Your punishment, which You do not ward off from a transgressing nation. And O Allah! Send salutations and blessings upon our master Mohammed, and upon his entire family and companions.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

اَللّٰهُمَّ اهْدِنَا فِيْمَنْ هَدَيْتَ ط وَ عَافِنَا فِيْمَنْ عَافَيْتَ ط
وَتَوَلَّنَا فِيْمَنْ تَوَلَّيْتَ ط وَبَارِكْ لَنَا فِيْمَا اَعْطَيْتَ ط وَقِنَا شَرَّمَا قَضَيْتَ ط
فَاِنَّكَ تَقْضِىْ وَلَا يُقْضٰى عَلَيْكَ ط اِنَّهٗ لَا يَذِلُّ مَنْ وَّالَيْتَ ط
وَلَا يَعِزُّ مَنْ عَادَيْتَ ط تَبَارَكْتَ رَبَّنَا وَتَعَالَيْتَ ط نَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَنَتُوْبُ
اِلَيْكَ ط وَصَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ الْكَرِيْمِ ط اَللّٰهُمَّ اَعِزَّالْاِسْلَامَ
وَالْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ط اَللّٰهُمَّ اَيِّدِالْاِسْلَامَ وَالْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ط اَللّٰهُمَّ انْصُرِ
الْاِسْلَامَ وَالْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ط وَاَنْجِزْوَعْدَكَ وَكَانَ حَقًّاعَلَيْنَا
نَصْرُالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ط اَللّٰهُمَّ اَلِّفْ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ط
وَاَصْلِحْ ذَاتَ بَيْنِهِمْ وَانْصُرْهُمْ عَلٰى عَدُوِّكَ وَعَدُوِّهِمْ ط
اَللّٰهُمَّ اَهْلِكِ الْكَفَرَةَ الَّذِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِكَ ط
وَيُكَذِّبُوْنَ رُسُلَكَ ط وَيُقَاتِلُوْنَ اَوْلِيَائَكَ ط اَللّٰهُمَّ خَالِفْ
بَيْنَ كَلِمَتِهِمْ وَزَلْزِلْ اَقْدَامَهُمْ ط اَللّٰهُمَّ فَرِّقْ جَمْعَهُمْ وَ خَرِّبْ
بِلَادَهُمْ ط اَللّٰهُمَّ اَلْقِ فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ ط اَللّٰهُمَّ اَنْزِلْ
بِهِمْ بَاْسَكَ الَّذِىْ لَا تَرُدُّهٗ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ط
وَصَلَّ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى عَلٰى سَيِّدِنَامُحَمَّدٍ
وَّعَلٰى اٰلِهٖ وَ اَصْحَابِهٖ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ط

TRANSLITERATION

Allaahumahdinaa Feeman Hadayt. Wa Aafinaa Feeman Aafayt. Wa Tawallanaa Feeman Tawallayt. Wa Baarik Lanaa Feemaa A'atayt. Wa Qinaa Sharra Maa Qadhayt. Fa Innaka Taqdhee Wa Laa Yuqdhaa Alayk. Innahoo Laa Yadhillu Maw Waalayt. Wa Laa Ya'izzu Man Aadayt. Tabaarakta Rabbanaa Wa Ta Aalayt. Nastaghfiruka Wa Natoobu Ilayk. Wa Sallallaahu Alan Nabiyyil Kareem. Allaahumma A'izzil Islaama Wal Muslimeen. Allaahumma Ayyidil Islaama Wal Muslimeen. Allaahummansuril Islaama Wal Muslimeen. Wa Anjiz Wa'daka Wa Kaana Haqqan Alaynaa Nasrul Mu'mimeen. Allaahumma Allif Bayna Quloobil Mu'mineen. Wa Aslih Dhaata Baynihim. Wansurhum Alaa Aduwwika Wa Aduwwihim. Allaahumma Ahlikil Kafaratal Ladheena Yasuddoona An Sabeelik. Wa Yukadh Dhiboona Rusulak. Wa Yuqaatiloona Auliyaa'ak. Allaahumma Khaalif Bayna Kalimatihim Wa Zalzil Aqdaamahum. Allaahumma Farriq Jam'ahum Wa Kharrib Bilaadahum. Allaahumma Alqi Fee Quloobi Himurru'ba. Allaahumma Anzil Bihim Ba'sakalladhee Laa Tarudduhoo Anil Quamil Mujrimeen. Wa Sallillaahumma Wa Sallim Alaa Sayyidinaa Mohammedew Wa Alaa Aalihee Wa Ashaabihee Ajma'een.