



Top doctor offers services to war victims

South Africa's top plastic surgeon, Dr Ridwaan Mia has offered his services to treat victims of war in Syria as reports filtered through that scores of children and adults are in urgent need of specialist doctors after reports of chlorine gas attacks this week.

It is not known exactly how many people are in need for treatment for burns and injuries sustained by bombing as the rebels backed by the West and with Iran and Russia supporting President Bashar Al Assad escalated despite a United Nations resolution calling for a cease fire.

"I have offered my services without charge to two aid agencies and informed them that I am available to travel to Syria and treat patients who might be flown to South Africa on board mercy flights," said Dr Mia.



Meanwhile, leading commentator, activist and one of the sharpest legal minds in the country, Hafiz A B Mohamed said that the battle in Syria by the western powers and their proxies is one step in the eventual battle against an Islam that never ever surrenders to tyranny. He said that should the West lose the battle in Syria, almost all the proxy states will collapse like a pack of cards.

This past week, over 500 people who lost their lives, 120 of them were children as the bombing on the eastern enclave of Ghouta, near Damascus, Syria was intensified over the last week.

The Syrian and Russian governments deny that their attacks, despite a United Nations resolution to a ceasefire for humanitarian aid to get through are not aimed at civilians. "But for last seven consecutive days, the bombing had continued and despite the UN resolution for a ceasefire, hostilities go on unabated.

A spokesman pointed out that 400 000 people live in eastern Ghouta which is made up of towns and farms. It has been under government siege since 2013. It is believed

that this is the last stronghold being held by rebel forces, which are being armed and supported by certain western governments.

With Iran, Russia supporting Assad and the rebels by the west, each is blaming the other for the escalating violence over the past week. Iranian General Mohammad Baqeri is reported to have said that they would respect the ceasefire; he added that it did not cover rebel held parts of Damascus. Russia on the other hand said that they were relying on western supporters of the rebels to enforce the truce. International aid agencies have been left "ineffectual" as the bombing continues.

The war between President Bashar al-Assad and rebel forces has left thousands of civilians dead, even more homeless and countless children who live, if they are lucky enough to survive the bombing from one day to another with need for urgent medical attention.

In a special report, Al Jazeera TV's Zeina Khodr reported, "As of Monday, February 26, Syrian forces have "not been able to take an inch of territory." Also that Government forces have allegedly used mortar shells, barrel bombs, cluster bombs, and bunker-busting munitions. The report went onto say that Syria's Civil Defence rescuers, also known as the White Helmets, said victims in Eastern Ghouta were showing symptoms "consistent with exposure to toxic chlorine gas".

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described allegations of the gas attack as "bogus stories". The report went onto say, "As of February 26, the death toll in the past three months has exceeded 700 civilians in Eastern Ghouta. This includes 185 children and 109 women. Syrian government officials say "terrorists" are using civilians as human shields.

Human rights lawyer, Saber Jhazbhai said that this is a war crime. "All the leaders involved should be charged at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. It certainly a war crime which must make leaders from the very top including Assad, Putin, Donald Trump, Emanuel Macron of France, Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and certain elements of Hizbullah. They are all liable for the wanton killing, maiming, destruction of communities and the murder of children. All it needs is one victim to; lay a complaint and I hope that it is done soon," said Mr Jhazbhai.

"I strongly condemn the killing of innocents by both State as well as non-state actors in Ghouta and elsewhere in Syria. I call on all parties to allow sustained humanitarian access to civilians in order to deliver food and medicine to the suffering children, women and men to prevent further loss of life." Commented Imam Dr Rashied Omar of the Claremont Main Road Mosque.



Pandor speaks out

One of the priorities of the Government during 2018 is to break diplomatic ties with Israel, according to Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor. Speaking during the State of the Nation Address in Parliament, she said that any foray into international cooperation in this year in which we celebrate President Nelson Mandela and Mama Albertina Sisulu reminds South Africans that we are beneficiaries of their courageous commitment to international friendship. "The majority party has been mandated to cut ties with Israel given the absence of genuine initiatives by Israel to secure lasting peace and a viable two-state solution that includes full freedom and democracy for the Palestinian people. We must show similar courage and commitment. We have obligations to our friends in struggle who stood beside us in trying times. We must never forget them. President Mandela began building links of solidarity in Africa and we must never waver from this critical focus. Our programme of international policy and practice has been significantly strengthened by the 54th conference of the ANC," she said. Pandor said that newly elected President Cyril Ramaphosa was determined to continue the leadership given by the struggle activists over decades to be part of the battle for a free Palestine.

Born and bred in Inanda, north of Durban she comes from a long line of academics and scholars who have been part of the liberation struggle for more than 100 years. She was appointed Minister of Education in 2004 having to over see transformation of the classroom. In 2009 she was promoted to Minister of Home Affairs. Finally in 2014, she became Minister of Science and Technology heralding the country to become a leading participant in the development of cutting edge developments throughout the continent. Her grandfather was Z K Matthews, a teacher by profession and an anti apartheid activist who went onto become the Cape President of the African National Congress. Her father, Joe Matthews was a leading lawyer and was in the front line of anti-apartheid campaigns. Married to Sharif Pandor, they have four children, Fazlur, Aisha, Suraya and Harron

Bhai Azad - Using social media to promote love of Urdu

Urdu poet, Bhai Azad is using the social media to teach thousands of people this ancient language and he told Farook Khan on Radio Al-Ansar's programme, 90 minutes how he is getting results beyond all expectations. Technology, he said is setting people free, especially women who have been relegated from the centre stage when it came to the arts. "Now there are women who are turning to my Facebook Page and sign up on my Whatsapp connection and are learning Urdu and how to write poetry, especially in praise of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him)," said Mr Azad.

He pointed out that for eight months last year, he ran Urdu classes and that more than 250 children had enrolled, many of them girls who wanted to write poetry, read naaths and write on Islam. "There always has been an enthusiasm in our community to study Urdu, to write poetry, prose and lyrics for naaths, but we do not have the facilities to ensure that we have a sustainable growth in student numbers. "We would also have to grow Urdu education to such a level, that our standard is extremely high and that our future writers and performers will be among the best in the world. Presently I have people from India, Pakistan, Malaysia, China and various African countries who are also learning Urdu from his social media platforms. There is a great movement among people of the world who want to study and enjoy the Urdu language. During my boyhood, Mayville was the Little India of South Africa and we had a rich Indian and Islamic culture. WE went to madressa where we had dedicated teachers who ensured that we spoke Urdu correctly. The pronunciation had to be perfect. This was even before we could start reciting naaths and once we had reached a certain level, then only where we allowed to appear at community functions. Annually there was a competition and the group in which I was included won every year that we took part," said Mr Azad.

As the years developed, so did his love for the Urdu language and while in his early years, he developed an interest in quawali, which in those days was part of the community. Gatherings were almost a weekly event, not just in Durban but also in many parts of the country. "We developed a culture which brought all people who had an interest in Indian languages together. Writers, singers, musicians and performing artists who developed a unity which enabled people to develop a strong bond which led to a better quality of life. "This is what we need to do to ensure that the present stalemate is broken and I believe that it must start in the homes. The parents must take the lead and all they have to do is to turn to social

media and they will get the information to become proficient in Urdu and its related art forms. It will create an even stronger bond among parents and their children, with their extended families and even their neighbours. This is a valuable vehicle for the advancement of our way of life which is Islam," said Mr Azad.

There are a number of scholars whom he knows personally who are also keen to teach Urdu and the writing of Naaths and poetry. He was encouraging them to turn to the social media to share their talents with anyone who might be keen to acquire this knowledge. He added that he worked with the Soofie Darbar in Riverside closely for most of his life and served as the Director of Ceremonies at annual Urs and various other religious events. However the physical bond was broken when the apartheid government enforced the Group Areas Act and this family was dispossessed of their home and was moved to Chatsworth. But as fate would have it, many years later, Mr Azad was able to buy a property next to the Soofie Darbar. He joined Radio Al Ansaar and produced a Naath programme before quitting and joining Radio Lotus where he presents the Quawali segment on Sunday nights. His archive has more than three million naaths, songs and various other categories of Islamic performing arts.

Career wise, Mr Azad qualified as a chartered accountant and landed a job as a bank manager in Johannesburg before returning to Durban where he launched his own business. He launched Zada Bricktile, which he described as a "revolutionary wall cladding" which ensured that homeowners did not have to paint their walls "never again." For 28 years, he steered his company, until the authorities forced him out of his premises. "I just shut it down and did not do anything for a few years. I eventually decided to develop a water bottling plant. I started exploration on my land in Riverside. The drilling started about two years ago. We struck water at 72 meters and it was scientifically established that the quality was exceptionally good. Getting the paper work was tougher than drilling for water, but once that was cleared, I set up the bottling plant. We are now pumping nine liters of water every hour. With the drought in Cape Town, here is a great demand and I am sending truck loads every week to help in this emergency. I also run a social responsibility programme for schools and other institutions," said Mr Azad.

Farook Khan (L) in studio with Bhai Azad (R) during live broadcast "90 Minutes" on Radio Al-Ansar, Friday 23 February 2018.



UKZN student Yousuf Vawda scoops top Regional Corobrik Prize

Durban's Masters in Architecture student Mr Yousuf Vawda, is one of eight bright young minds who is in line for a R50 000 prize which is due to be announced in Johannesburg during May. All of them achievers in their respective universities from throughout South Africa and Vawda are the only candidates from KwaZulu-Natal. Vawda collected R8 500 for winning the regional architecture competition, which has been running for 30 years and is aimed at promoting excellence in the profession. His peers have described Vawda, "as a talent." Apart from collecting the top accolade in the province, he collected another R4 500 in the "best use of clay" section.

The soft spoken, hard working student said he was surprised when he was declared the winner. "I am very pleased to have won, considering the quality of some of the other students' work," he said. According to the University of KwaZulu-Natal website, his entry comprised work from his internship



during which time he concentrated primarily on residential projects as well as selected student projects from his undergraduate and masters studies.

His winning project is based on his thesis titled: Exploring the Relationship Between

Sacred Space and the Memory of the Dead, in Christianity, through Mnemonics: A Proposed Interment Complex for Durban. The main concept for the design is based on the medieval term: "Memento Mori", which means "remember your death".

Architecture lecturer Mr Juan Solis said 20 examiners – 10 external and 10 UKZN staff members – evaluated entries from 27 students over three days. "It was a great evening for students, parents, external examiners, professional architects, staff, and our Dean, Professor Ernest Khalema. They could all see the projects on display. Congratulations to our students," said Solis. The second prize went to Joshua Montile who received R6 500 and Thabo Cele secured third place of R4 500.

Architecture has always been of special interest to Vawda and he feels that buildings are bound to change dramatically and the use of clean energy would see the growth in eco-friendly buildings.