

Bo-Kaap Residents Protest Gentrification

On Friday 25 May 2018, the residents of the Bo-Kaap held an "iftar" or locally known as "boeka" protest in Wale Street, Cape Town. The protest action which saw hundreds of residents and their supporters break their fast with a shared meal in the middle of Wale street was the culmination of a week-long campaign aimed at raising their concerns about the virulent gentrification of the area.

Osman Shabodien, chairperson of the Bo-Kaap Civic Association, said their iftar protest was about "fighting for our dignity". "We had to do this a long time ago. We have taken over what is ours. This is our Bo-Kaap. This is our home and what we are fighting for," said Shabodien. "The government could not chuck us all out in apartheid. They are trying to chuck us out now by making it impossible for us to live here. They are putting up our rates. They use this area as a tourist zone. We want affordable houses in the Bo-Kaap."

Shaykh Dr. Dawood Terblanche, Imam at the Leeuwen Street Masjid in the Bokaap (one of more than seven masajid in the area), said they have "immense frustrations about how the City of Cape Town is treating us. We are in ward 77, smack-bang in a white area. We are only a minority in this ward. It has more than 30 000 people and in Bo-Kaap we are only just over 1 000 people. It means the City does not need the people of Bo-Kaap, therefore they are doing whatever they want to do with us."

The Bo-Kaap protests have received good support by the youth. One of its members Shakirah Dramat, who is an activist with the campaign Bo-Kaap Rise, described the protests as follows: "Over the past few days people have burned tyres but now that we have the attention of the world we would like them to know that this is what we are about. Tonight is one of the most beautiful sights I have seen. We are standing together."

Muslim Youth Movement member and Bo-Kaap resident, Mohammed Groenewald, described the purpose of the protest as follows: "Bo-Kaap is one of the most precious historical landmarks and cradle of Islam in South Africa and the heritage of the area must be protected by all, especially Muslims, and therefore it has now become a 'Fard Kifayah' a communal obligation to support the protest action. We have been burning tyres and disrupting traffic for the last few weeks and it is directed at the City of Cape Town who is gentrifying us on every level possible. The iftar that was planned had a specific agenda to create attention for our cause. Our neighbours, most of them non-Muslims came to support us. The Iftar was part of us claiming back our streets. The city claims the street belongs to them. They give film companies permits to film in the streets, despite our objections. They also approve 30 story buildings in the Bo-Kaap. We have taken this matter to court as well



as their approval of the gold smelter in Jordan Street. They keep increasing our rates and this is clearly economic gentrification. We will continue to protest until our demands are met."

The Claremont Main Road Masjid (CMRM) has expressed support and solidarity with the Bo-Kaap protest actions that has brought attention to the unsolicited gentrification of the Bo-Kaap area. In a statement CMRM said: "We fully support the commitment of the Bo-Kaap community to not only protect the heritage of the Bo-Kaap, but also to ensure affordable housing in the city centre for its residents. We stand in solidarity with the Bo-Kaap residents against predatory developers and complicit city authorities who care only to gentrify the Bo-Kaap and inner-city areas, crowding out black working class and lower middle-class residents near the City centre."

Palestine takes Israel to International Criminal Court

In a surprise move which shocked Middle Eastern countries; Palestine has taken Israel to the International Criminal Court in what has been described as a "historic step towards justice" this week. The move finally came at The Hague after long drawn out deliberations by Palestinian authorities to make Israel and its cohorts like the United States accountable for the on-going violence.

Foreign Minister Riad Malkisaid made the call for an immediate investigation into the actions of Israel in Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank and the recent spate of violence, which claimed the lives of over 100 people to the chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda. "There is a culture of impunity in Israel for crimes against Palestinians. This is Palestine's test to the international mechanism of accountability and respect for international law," he said.

Palestine's Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs Ammar Hijazi said that the recent violence required that action be taken against Israel. This move came only days after the United States

moved its Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and at a time when relationships between the two states is at its lowest. There have been no peace talks for four years.

The Court has been conducting a low level investigation since 2015 into crimes allegedly perpetrated by both sides during 2014. Also into Israeli's Settlements Policies. Israel is not part of the International Criminal Court; those implicated could be arrested, especially in countries, which are signatories. This would "ground" many people for whom search warrants could be issued and enforced in member countries.

The Court depends on member countries to effect arrest warrants and this has proved to be effective in many cases. It is hoped that this week's development would lead to a full blown investigation which would lead to top Israeli government, military and politicians being charged with crimes against humanity. The Court is a last resort for cases where national authorities cannot or will not launch investigations.

Book Review: Chota Motala

The long-awaited biography on Dr Chota Motala by Goolam Vahed has at long last been released and among everything else, the poignant story about how he was forced out of his home at 433 Boom Street under the Group Areas Act has been told publicly for the first time.

There are a host of sagas, some of which are being told publicly for the first time. The story of the havoc caused by the implementation of the Group Areas Act is probably the worst attack on people of colour to destroy their economic base. It is not often, that the cruelty of this Act is clear, like Mr Vahed has been able to highlight without making any comment.

It shows the callousness and the cruelty in which the then Pietermaritzburg apartheid City Council acted against thousands of residents to make apartheid work.

Here is an extract: "Protests failed to halt group areas evictions. Motala received his own dreaded letter on 7 August 1962.

"As you are not doubt aware, you are at present resident in an area which has been proclaimed for ownership and occupation by members of the coloured group. In view of the foregoing, it would be advisable for you to make arrangements timeously to resettle in an area, which has been proclaimed for ownership and occupation by members of your own group. Should you delay in doing so, it could result in considerable inconvenience to you at a later stage. (Motala penned next to this sentence: What does this mean). In case you should require any assistance, this office would, of course, do its utmost to help you to resettle yourself.

It ended with the following chilling sentence: "This letter is addressed to you in the spirit of friendliness and co-operation and it is trusted that you will accept it in this light."

This and a number of other episodes are included in this book, which is a "must read" especially for the younger generation, so that they get an insight of the struggle that imposed such misery on the majority of the South African population.

Dr Zweli Mkhize wrote the foreword, saying, "The story of the life of Dr Mahomed Chota Motala rightfully deserves special preservation in the annals of our history, among the narratives of the journeys of Chief Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada and many others who came into contact with him and drew tremendous inspiration to fight for liberation.

"It is a story more than worthy of its own chapter in this history, because Motala was no ordinary medical practitioner. With his educational qualification and early exposure to life overseas as a young man, he could have opted for more lucrative and personally rewarding options. Instead, he returned to the belly of the beast that was apartheid South Africa and endured the humiliation of prison chains, bannings and prosecution for treason.

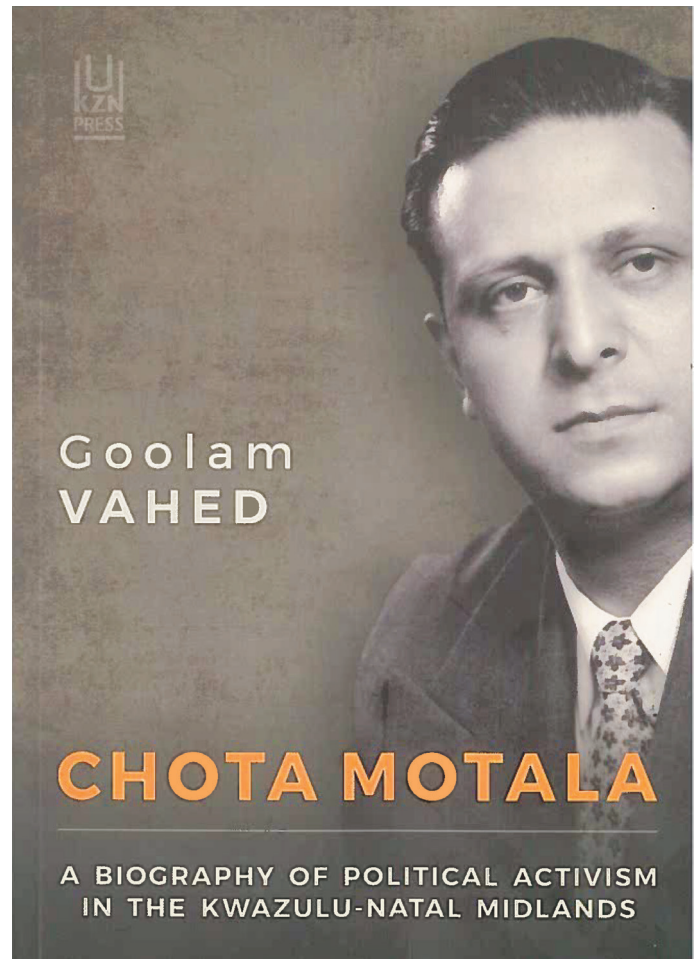
Dr Motala's legacy is celebrated annually at the Mancosa and Regent College where a memorial lecture is delivered by leading personalities.

History curriculum in schools

The South African Muslim Network is looking for experts to ensure that the contribution of Islam and Muslims in South Africa is included in the history curriculum in Schools. Chairperson, Dr Faisal Suliman called on experts in education, history and retired academics to assist.

The history curriculum for schools is shockingly inadequate when it comes to covering the contributions of Islam and Muslims in South Africa. He pointed out that the government is considering revising elements of the South African history curriculum.

Dr Suliman added that the role of Muslims and of the Indian and Malay communities in South Africa get very little attention. "Particularly regarding the anti-apartheid struggles as well as our role in the development of our present multi-cultural society. Other population groups with much smaller numbers have greater representation in the present curriculum. The South African Muslim Network wants to formulate a comprehensive analysis and provide recommendations for inclusion. "We are looking for experts within the Muslim community who can assist with an analysis of the present curriculum. It is absolutely essential that our history be intertwined in the South African historical fabric and worldview."



Professor Yusuf Karodia who is the funder of the two distinguished institutions, said that Dr Motala was one of the most relevant anti-apartheid leaders who has yet to be fully recognized. Another leading academic, Professor Anis Karodia said that he hoped that more research would be conducted, so that future generations would get a more precise account of Dr Motala's influence, especially during the writing of the Bill of Rights which is a cornerstone of South Africa's democracy.

The book is authored by Goolam Vahed who is Professor of History at the University of KwaZulu Natal. He is the author of several books and writes on histories of migration, ethnicity and identity formation among Indian South Africans. The book is available from Shesha Books, 34 Samora Machel Street, Durban, Tel 031 332 2702 - www.sheshabooks.co.za

Workshops by Afroz Ali at SLA

Imam Afroz Ali will be conducting two one day workshops at the Suleman Lockhat Auditorium, 222 Kenilworth Road, Overport. The first workshop on Saturday 2 June 2018 is on the Nature of Ethics: a Ghazalian Paradigm and will be held between 13.30 and 16.30. On Sunday 3rd June he discusses Wellbeing and Transformative Living between 11.00 - 15.30.

Imam Afroz Ali has been a scholar in Islamic Sciences and has established educational facilities globally. He has also taught consecutively over 7 years at the yearly Deen Intensive Program and lectured on Islam on many topics. He is currently based in Sydney, Australia and is the Managing Director and Senior Instructor at Transformative Living which provides ethical mentorship development programs to counsellors and psychologists., as well as individuals.

The workshops are organised by the Al-Ikhlaas Academia library and Resource Centre, Baitul-Hikmah, Awqaf SA and the Islamic Forum. Registration is free but you have to register at www.islamicforum.org.za where you will also find more information on Imam Afroz Ali and details of the workshop.