The Muslim News Est. 1989

News & views of Muslims in the UK

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COP30—Climate Action Summit:

Indigenous communities vs. Fossil fuel interests



Indigenous icon Raoni participates in a meeting in the Blue Zone at COP30 in Belém, Brazil, on November 15, while Indigenous members of civil society take part in the People's Plenary. (Credit: COP30/AA; UN Climate Change/Kiara Worth)

Sarah Sakeena Marshall

Fossil fuel interests won the day at the latest UN climate conference, COP30. Held in Belem, Brazil, a city known as "the gateway to the Amazon" between November 10-22, the conference's proximity to the Amazon Rainforest and strong Indigenous presence was expected to positively influence negotiations by centering the voices of vulnerable local populations living within such a fragile and globally significant ecosystem.

However, the conference also drew attention for the disproportionate number of fossil fuel lobbyists present—1 in 25 attendees. Negotiations went over time as competing interests grappled over the language of the final text, which could not be signed without a consensus.

Significantly, few heads of major states attended the talks, though most sent delegations. At previous COPs, national leaders would usually make an appearance; their absence speaks to the dulling sentiment around climate multilateralism.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer, appeared for two days, signing onto a few initiatives, but notably refusing to contribute to the tropical forest fund. The U.S., one of the world's top carbon emitters, sent no official delegation, though some state representatives attended. President Donald Trump again withdrew the U.S. from the landmark Paris Climate Agreement and recently claimed that climate change is a "con job."

At the summit's opening, Brazil's President, Lula da Silva, addressed delegations, warning, "We are moving in the right direction, but at the wrong speed. At the current pace, we are still heading toward a rise in global temperature of more than one and a half degrees. Crossing that threshold is a risk we cannot afford to take." Despite the conference's discussion of keeping global temperatures to 1.5°C below pre-industrial levels, scientists announced that that threshold was passed in 2024. Many now aim to keep warming levels below 2°C.

Initiatives signed

As the 2-week conference progressed, delegations signed onto various initiatives. The Belem Declaration on Global Green Industrialisation received support from the UK, Australia, South Korea, Tuvalu, the UAE, and other governments, along with over 20 international organisations.

The initiative aims to accelerate decarbonisation of heavy emitting industries and promote green industrialisation, though the weak language in the document primarily focuses on "recognising," "sharing," and "acknowledging" various truths about climate change and calling for cooperation.

The Resilient Agriculture Investment for Net-Zero Land Degradation (RAIZ) Project seeks to invest in sustainable agriculture such as regenerative farming to address soil degradation, and to tackle food insecurity. The UK, Saudi Arabia, Norway, Japan, and 6 other countries supported the initiative, led by Brazil.

Over the years, agriculture has led to significant deforestation in the Amazon, displacing communities and threatening biodiversity. Soil degradation is a global problem exacerbated by planting the same crops (monoculture).

Seasonal changes also make it harder for farmers to plan when to plant and harvest, leading to concerns about crop yields. Climate denialism and misinformation took on an important role at the negotiations. During his opening speech, President Lula mentioned how climate misinformation was harming the perception of multilateral cooperation and climate action. Brazil, along with the United Nations, spearheaded the adoption of the Global Declaration on Information Integrity, which aims to combat misinformation, particularly related to climate change.

The issue became especially relevant after a fire broke out at the conference and some netizens spread conspiracies blaming China for the blaze. The fire was quickly contained, and no major injuries were reported, though over a dozen people received treatment for smoke inhalation.

Indigenous voices

Multiple protests led by Indigenous groups took place at the conference, with demonstrators blocking entrances and disrupting negotiations to demand demarcation of Indigenous territories and an end to commercial development projects, as well as urgent climate action including an end to fossil fuels.

The Muslim News communicated with Tyapompo Arara, an Indigenous leader of the Arara women attending the conference, who stated, "Our forest is being heavily destroyed by farmers, loggers, and miners, and this is very worrying for us within our village."

Bushe Matis, General Coordinator of UNIVAJA, a non-profit organisation representing the Indigenous Peoples of the Vale do Javari spoke with *The Muslim News* about COP30 and said, "Everyone is seeing that all Brazilian peoples and others are participating. Whether they like it or not, our voice is being heard. Whether they will decide based on that is another question. We hope that the largest funders who want to support indigenous peoples and traditional communities will send resources directly to grassroots Indigenous organisations, that there will be more demarcation of territories, and that the government will respect Indigenous rights."

At the conference, Brazil's President recognised 10 new Indigenous territories, which will be protected under Brazilian law after he signs a presidential decree.

Solutions are local

The Muslim News interviewed Elisabete Dumbia, a Program Analyst at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and part of the Guinea-Bissau delegation at COP30. Dumbia expressed, "My main goal is to strengthen partnership with donors, identify new financing, and to share lessons learned from our previous project, the coastal resilience project, that just closed this month."

That project was a 6-year coastal resiliency project for $12 million, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and UNDP, that replanted mangroves, rebuilt schools and roads, and supported women, ultimately benefitting around 80,000 people.

While national delegations wrangle over language on phasing out fossil fuels, local communities are mobilising resources to adapt to climate change and bolster their resilience.

Solutions negotiated by national delegations are ultimately implemented at the local level; green infrastructure projects happen within communities. As Global South nations demand stronger climate action and more funding to protect their vulnerable communities, delegations from countries heavily reliant on fossil fuels sought weaker language for the final document—and the latter again prevailed.

Climate conferences bring together ambitious groups—the youth whose future hangs in the balance, leaders who fear debt and social unrest following a natural disaster, and lobbyists of all kinds. The lofty goals and final outcome, which often fall short, may make headlines, but those participants who cut through the noise, those who are doing the work on the ground to implement real resilience and adaptation projects, they are the truly ambitious.

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INDIA AT CROSSROADS:
The dangerous normalisation of violence against Muslims

The three stories from India in this issue of *The Muslim News*, each chilling on its own, together reveal a nation drifting toward the everyday acceptance of anti-Muslim hatred since Narendra Modi took office in 2014. These are not random tragedies; they are warning flares from a society where hate speech has become routine, mob violence expected, and accountability a vanishing act.

A young Muslim man beaten to death on Diwali night in Delhi; a child forced to apologise after a mob storms her home over a remark about food; a former ruling-party lawmaker openly promising government jobs to Hindu men who "bring Muslim girls." These incidents occur across different states, involve a variety of actors, and arise from varied sparks. Yet one undeniable thread binds them: Muslims are targeted simply for being Muslim, while those who stoke or commit these abuses often feel shielded by political cover, police apathy, or a public discourse steeped in relentless dehumanisation.

A pattern too obvious to ignore

Salman Mushtaq's killing in Delhi began with what should have been a minor dispute over filming videos, yet it spiralled into brutal, lethal violence aimed squarely at the Muslim men involved. Neighbours speak of a pervasive "climate of fear," and they are not exaggerating. Across India, minor provocations have repeatedly turned deadly when Muslims are involved, transforming everyday life into a minefield of suspicion and peril. Mobs grow emboldened when hatred is rewarded with silence, and when those entrusted with justice look the other way, terror becomes routine and fear a constant companion.

In Ghaziabad, a child's offhand comment about beef, a food taboo for many Hindus, was seized as a pretext for a mob to storm a Muslim family's home. Men hurled slurs, beat the girl, and forced her into a bruised, coerced apology, which they filmed and circulated online like a trophy of humiliation. Even more shocking, the police filed a case against the child herself, a cruel inversion of justice. This harrowing episode reflects a wider, well-documented pattern: Muslim victims are routinely treated as offenders, while perpetrators, often connected to extremist groups—face little or no accountability.

In Uttar Pradesh, a former BJP legislator brazenly offered government jobs in return for "bringing Muslim girls", an unmistakable invitation to harassment, abduction, and communal exploitation. The crowd's frenzied cheers underscore how disturbingly normalised such vile rhetoric has become. This is not the fringe; this is an elected official wielding public authority, speaking the language of hate that countless others now echo with impunity.

When hate speech becomes governance

India's constitutional values promise equal protection for all citizens. Article 14 guarantees equality before the law and equal protection under it; Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth; Article 21 protects the right to life and personal liberty; and Article 25 ensures freedom of conscience and religion. Yet the reality is increasingly at odds with these pledges. Hindu nationalist rhetoric, once confined to the margins, has seeped into mainstream politics, amplified by social media networks, and echoed loudly at rallies and street corners.

Islamophobic attacks on Muslims now follow a grimly predictable pattern. A minor dispute or innocuous social media post can ignite a confrontation, quickly escalating as mobs—often linked to organised extremist groups—mobilise with alarming speed. These assaults are filmed and shared online, turning violence into a spectacle meant to intimidate entire communities. Meanwhile, police responses are sluggish, ambiguous, or openly biased, and the broader political climate often rewards, excuses, or ignores the perpetrators. This is not random chaos; it is a carefully nurtured cycle, sustained through silence at the top, complicity in the middle, and active participation at the grassroots.

A crisis of rule of law—and moral direction

India is not lacking laws against hate speech, assault, abduction, or incitement to violence. What it lacks is the political will to enforce them equally. The selective use of the state apparatus, charging a bruised Muslim child while extremists livestream their threats, undermines not only minority rights but the very legitimacy of the justice system.

Rights groups have repeatedly warned that the country is entering a perilous phase of impunity. The demolition of Muslim homes without due process, vigilante "cow-protection" killings, harassment of interfaith couples, and the weaponisation of social media outrage all reflect a systematic erosion of constitutional safeguards. When hate is rewarded and dissent punished, violence is not an accident, it is an outcome.

Human Rights Watch has uncovered another alarming dimension of persecution: since May 2025, authorities in India have unlawfully expelled hundreds of Bengali-speaking Muslims to Bangladesh without due process. Many of those expelled are long-time residents of India—some even Indian citizens—yet were forcibly rounded up, taken to the border, and pushed into Bangladesh, often under threats or physical coercion by state officials. These expulsions, concentrated in BJP-governed states, violate international human rights law and further illustrate how state machinery is being deployed to target Muslim communities. The demolition of homes, vigilante violence, harassment, and arbitrary expulsions all represent a systematic dismantling of constitutional safeguards. When hate is rewarded and dissent punished, violence is not accidental—it is deliberate.

The cost: a fractured society and a weakened democracy

India is home to the world's second-largest Muslim population. When fear stalks the streets and communities are hounded simply for their faith, the very soul of Indian democracy falters. These stories expose more than the vulnerability of a single community, they lay bare the rot spreading through India's social fabric. They depict a society where mobs mete out punishment without law, where political leaders toy with rhetoric verging on incitement to genocide for applause, and where the state turns a blind eye, or worse, actively abandons, its solemn duty to protect. In such a climate, the promise of justice becomes hollow, and the foundations of coexistence tremble under the weight of sanctioned hatred.

A memory of freedom (pre-2014): Before the current trajectory took hold, India was celebrated as a beacon of democracy. In 2013, just before the Modi government's first term, Freedom House classified the country as "Free," awarding it a robust score of 77/100 with high marks for civil liberties. India ranked 27th on the EIU Democracy Index (score 7.92) and held a solid 0.567 on the V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index.

The unsettling reality (post-2014): Since 2014, India's democratic indicators have plunged sharply, revealing a stark erosion of political freedoms and civil liberties. Freedom House now classifies India as "Partly Free," with an online freedom score of just 51/100. Globally, the Human Freedom Index ranks India 110th, and the World Press Freedom Index places it at a shocking 151st out of 180 countries. These figures are more than statistics—they are the quantifiable symptoms of a deeper moral collapse. This trajectory threatens not only the safety of Muslims but the pluralistic identity of India itself. A functioning, honourable democracy cannot endure when any major community is systematically treated as prey.

What must happen now?

The moment for action is urgent. Those who commit or incite these attacks—including politically connected figures—must face swift and uncompromising prosecution. Silence from senior political leaders is complicity; they must denounce hate speech publicly and unequivocally. Police forces cannot remain passive—reform and accountability are essential to guarantee equal protection for all communities. Hate-crime monitoring must be strengthened, with independent oversight to ensure the law is enforced, not ignored. Civic society and the media must challenge misinformation, dismantle conspiracy theories, and confront propaganda that fuels division and terror. The safety, dignity, and very future of millions hang in the balance, and delay is a luxury India cannot afford.

India stands at a perilous crossroads

It risks normalising violence against its largest minority, letting fear, hatred, and impunity harden into lawless custom. Or it can reclaim the constitutional promise of equality and coexistence, defending the rights, safety, and dignity of millions before the damage becomes irreversible. The nation's moral and democratic future hangs in the balance, and its next choice will echo for generations. This decision will determine not only the safety of millions of Muslims but the very soul of Indian democracy.

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Very little concern about Islamophobic attacks by our PM

Sir, It was shocking to read your story and editorial in the last issue about how the leader of our country shows very little concern for Islamophobic and terror attacks against Muslim citizens. It took our Prime Minister 19 long days to visit the Peacehaven mosque, which was firebombed while worshippers were inside. Luckily, no one was hurt. You rightly argued that when synagogues are attacked, the PM is there straight away.

What a shame. Even a Home Secretary, who loses no time, is speaking to the right-wing press about her Muslimness — yet, like the PM, it took her 19 days to visit the mosque!

Yours,
Sarah Mohammed
London

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ISLAMOPHOBIA INDIA

Hindu mob attacks Muslim family in India after girl's beef comment



Nadine Osman

A Muslim family living on the outskirts of New Delhi was violently attacked in their home after a brief social media video showed their underage daughter saying she would eat beef — a comment that is considered offensive by many Hindu nationalists who regard cows as sacred. The remark quickly spread online and triggered outrage among hardline groups who accused the girl of insulting Hindu beliefs. Within hours, a mob appeared at the family's house in Tulsi Niketan, Ghaziabad, a densely populated suburb in northern India, shouting Islamophobic slurs and threatening to break in. Terrified and outnumbered, the family could do little but barricade themselves inside.

The mob included members of the Bajrang Dal and Hindu Raksha Dal, organisations associated with India's growing Hindu nationalist movement. The group was reportedly led by Daksh Chaudhary a well-known local extremist who has been repeatedly accused of delivering hate speeches targeting Muslims. Although police say they are searching for him, Chaudhary remains at large and continues to upload videos online from hiding.

Following the attack, a second video emerged on social media. It showed the teenage girl, bruised and clearly distressed, being forced to apologise for her earlier comments. Reports suggest that the recording may even have been made in the presence of police officers, raising concerns about whether authorities were complicit or failed in their duty to protect the victim. Chaudhary himself posted the video, mocking the girl and boasting that she had been "silenced." In further statements, he escalated his threats, saying: "She was barking so much. Now she has been rubbed off. If you speak against Hindutva, this is the fate you'll meet." *Hindutva* refers to an ideology that seeks to establish India as a nation defined primarily by Hindu identity.

The police response has prompted widespread criticism. Officials said they acted once the girl's original video went viral. They registered criminal complaints (known in India as First Information Reports) against both the attackers and the girl herself. While the mob faces charges including assault, intimidation and provoking a breach of peace under India's new criminal code, the girl has been reported for her remarks about political leaders. Police also noted that the family had not filed a formal complaint, which observers say may reflect fear of reprisals rather than unwillingness to pursue justice.

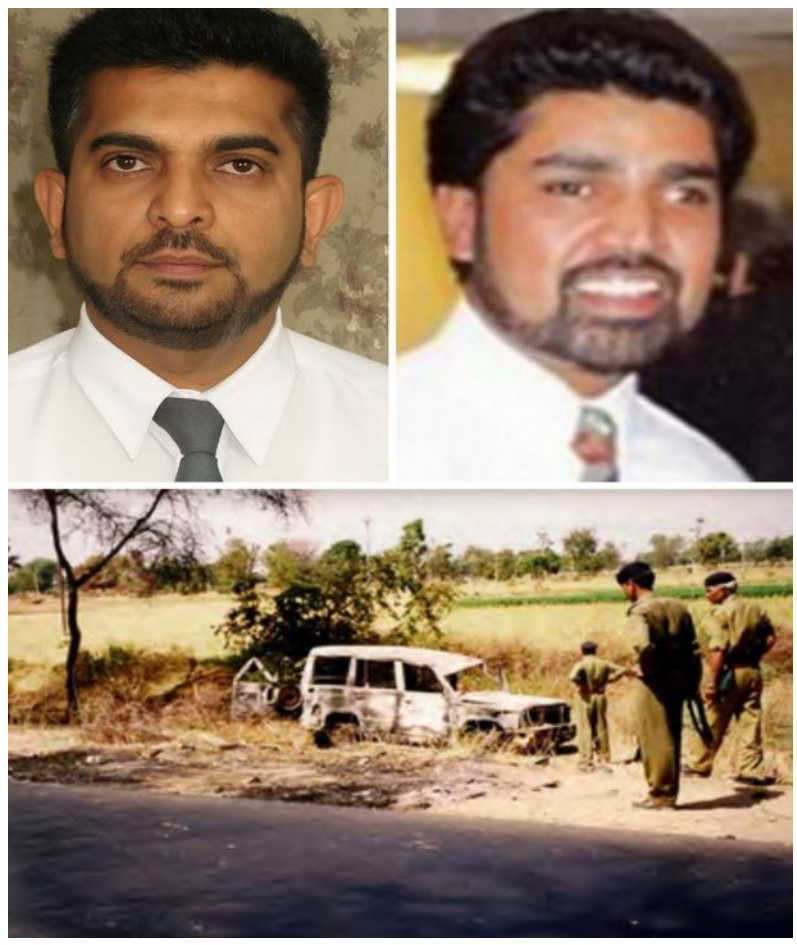
Two of the five named suspects, Annu Chaudhary and Amit Thakur, have been arrested. However, the central accused, Daksh Chaudhary, continues to evade authorities and has released several more inflammatory videos online.

The situation escalated when Pinki Chaudhary, a senior figure in the Hindu Raksha Dal, posted his own video statements demanding the girl's arrest and using openly anti-Muslim language. In one clip, he warned that his organisation could "go to any extent," and even called for the demolition of the family's home, a tactic increasingly used in parts of India as a form of extra-judicial punishment against minorities.

Police say the girl will be offered counselling, but her family remains traumatised and afraid. Human rights groups note that this incident is part of a broader pattern in India, where violence and intimidation against religious minorities (particularly Muslims) have risen sharply in recent years.

Feature photo: Screengrab shows the underage Muslim girl being led away from her home by the mob in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, following a viral video of her saying she would eat beef.
(Credit: X/CC)

Cross-party call in UK parliament for repatriation of 2002 Gujarat pogrom victims



Elham Asaad Buaras

A cross-party coalition of British parliamentarians, faith leaders, and human rights advocates has issued a renewed and urgent call for India to repatriate the remains of two British citizens killed during the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat, highlighting how the two-decade struggle for justice resonates with contemporary threats posed by far-right politics in the UK.

The call was made at a meeting in the UK Parliament on October 22, convened to support the long-standing Dawood Family Justice Campaign. Saeed and Sakil Dawood were abducted and murdered while on holiday in February 2002; their nephew, Imran Dawood, survived the attack. For over two decades, their family has sought both accountability and the return of the victims' remains, requests they say have been consistently denied by the Indian authorities.

The murders occurred during the widespread Gujarat pogrom, in which, according to independent and human rights investigations, over 2,000 Muslims were killed, over 200,000 homes and businesses were destroyed, and scores of brutal rapes were reported. Subsequent reports from organisations like Human Rights Watch have alleged complicity from elements of the state and local government.

Chaired by Mohamed Iqbal, the MP for Dewsbury & Batley, the meeting heard powerful testimony from family members and experts. Imran and Yusuf Dawood, whose story was featured in the BBC documentary The Modi Question, shared their protracted fight for closure. The meeting also heard from Akashi Bhatt, daughter of Sanjiv Bhatt, a former Senior Indian Police Service officer who had testified about the events.

Suresh Grover, National Coordinator of The Monitoring Group, which supported the event, highlighted the systemic denial of justice, stating that "Indian police and judiciary [are] implicated" in the case.

The discussion powerfully connected the historical trauma of the Gujarat pogrom to contemporary concerns in the UK. Sheikh Ibrahim Hussain of Southport Mosque spoke of the enduring pain for families targeted by religiously motivated violence, drawing a direct line to tactics he sees being deployed in Britain. He warned that the "politics of hate" that fuelled atrocities abroad is now being exploited by the British far-right, citing the "unprecedented" racist rioting last summer that targeted mosques, migrant communities, and asylum seeker accommodations across 27 towns.

The meeting concluded with a unified call for the Indian authorities to conduct a transparent forensic investigation, repatriate the victims' remains to their UK families, and adhere to international human-rights standards. As a family spokesperson stated, "Our loved ones were murdered abroad, but our pain has never been distant. Justice delayed is justice denied."

Photos: Sakil Dawood, Saeed Dawood, and the burned-out jeep from which they were abducted.
(Credit: Dawood family archive)

Editorial p2







Ex-BJP lawmaker sparks outrage for urging Hindu men to 'bring Muslim girls' in exchange for jobs

Elham Asaad Buaras

A former lawmaker from India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has drawn widespread condemnation after a video surfaced showing him urging Hindu men to "bring Muslim girls" in return for government jobs.

Raghvendra Pratap Singh, a former BJP Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Domariyaganj in Uttar Pradesh, made the inflammatory remarks during a public gathering on October 16. In the video, which quickly went viral on social media, Singh can be heard saying, "The Hindu boy who brings a Muslim girl, we will arrange a job for him." His comments were met with chants of "Jai Shri Ram" (Glory to Lord Rama), a slogan commonly used by Hindu nationalist groups, as he asked the crowd, "How many young men are ready?"

Although Singh no longer holds public office, he remains an influential BJP figure in the region. His statement has reignited concerns about the normalisation of hate speech and anti-Muslim rhetoric under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

The remarks provoked an immediate backlash from opposition parties and civil society. Sanjay Singh, national spokesperson for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), condemned the comments as "a direct incitement to criminality" and called for urgent police action.



"If a leader publicly urges abduction and forced conversion, the law must follow," he posted on X. "We cannot have a double standard where the UP police file cases against Muslims on flimsy grounds but look the other way when Hindu leaders incite violence. Arrest him now or the claim that law is equal for all will ring hollow."

He went on to question the moral implications of the statement, adding: "Which Hindu parent would want their son to be celebrated for abducting a girl? Is this the identity we want for Hinduism,one tied to coercion and criminality?"

Legal experts and human rights advocates said the remarks, if verified, could amount to criminal offences including incitement, abduction, hate speech, and attempted forced conversion.

"Such speeches are not mere rhetoric; they endanger Muslim women and legitimise criminal acts," said a local human rights lawyer. "Authorities must file a case and ensure these provocations don't translate into real-world violence."

The controversy fits into a wider pattern of hate speech by Hindu nationalist figures in northern India, particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. In recent years, several Hindutva leaders have been recorded offering money, rewards, or government jobs to Hindu men who "trap Muslim girls" or marry them.

Such rhetoric is often justified as retaliation against the so-called "love jihad" conspiracy theory, a debunked narrative alleging that Muslim men woo Hindu women to convert them to Islam.

Activists say this discourse has evolved into what is now referred to as the "Bhagwa Love Trap", in which Hindu nationalist networks allegedly encourage Hindu men to target Muslim women online and offline as a form of revenge or "reclamation".

Reports indicate that some of these groups operate through social media, training participants to create fake profiles, pose as Muslims, and lure Muslim women into relationships before revealing their true identities. Victims who resist are often humiliated or threatened, according to women's rights campaigners.

"Such organised harassment not only fuels communal hatred but also exposes Muslim women to serious psychological and physical harm," said one activist.

Critics argue that Singh's remarks underscore a broader culture of impunity for hate speech in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh, governed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Opposition parties and rights groups have long accused the state government of selectively applying the law, using police powers to target Muslims and political dissenters while ignoring inflammatory statements from Hindu nationalist figures.

Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, has witnessed a marked rise in anti-Muslim violence, hate speech, and punitive demolitions targeting Muslim communities in recent years. Rights organisations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have warned that the trend is deepening religious polarisation and eroding the rule of law.

Photo: Former BJP lawmaker Raghvendra Pratap Singh, who represented the Domariyaganj constituency in Uttar Pradesh, seen speaking at a public gathering in Dhankharpur village on October 16, 2025, where he allegedly urged Hindu men to "bring Muslim girls" in exchange for government jobs.

(Credit: Screengrab)

22 year old Muslim beaten to death in Delhi on Diwali night



Nadine Osman

A 22 year old Muslim man, Salman Mushtaq, was brutally beaten to death on Diwali night in Delhi's Nand Nagri area after a clash over filming short videos on a flyover, police said. Salman succumbed to his injuries two days later at Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital.

The altercation reportedly began when Salman and friends confronted a group of men who were also filming reels on the Nand Nagri flyover near the Bhopura toll plaza on October 24. According to his friend and complainant, 26 year old Sohail Mohammad, a scuffle broke out between the two groups over space. Salman allegedly took the key of a two wheeler used by one of the men to prevent him from fleeing, which escalated the situation. The group then reportedly punched and kicked Salman and repeatedly slammed his head against the flyover railing, leaving him critically injured.

Sohail said, "Salman scolded them, and they started abusing us. He then took away their bike keys to stop them from fleeing. This angered the men, who punched and kicked Salman. They tried to push him off the flyover and repeatedly smashed his head against the railing until he collapsed." Salman was first taken to a private hospital before being shifted to GTB Hospital, where he died two days later.

Salman's brother, Anan Mushtaq said, "My brother sells car parts and is involved in scrap dealing. He had stepped out after Diwali to meet friends. They often make short videos. I did not know this would happen. He was only trying to stop the men from shooting a reel. Why did they kill him?"

The Delhi Police said they lodged a case under Section 110 of the BNS (attempt to commit culpable homicide) immediately after the attack. DCP (Northeast) Ashish Mishra confirmed that teams have been deployed to trace and apprehend the suspects, who are also believed to reside nearby, and that the post mortem report is awaited.

The attack has left the local Muslim community shaken, with residents describing the incident as part of a wider climate of fear and insecurity. Rights groups have documented an increase in mob violence targeting Muslims in Delhi and across India, often arising from minor disputes or confrontations.

For Salman's family, what should have been a festive evening has become a lasting tragedy. His mother, clutching his photograph, said, "He only wanted to enjoy Diwali like others."

Photo: Salman Mushtaq, 22, was beaten to death in Delhi's Nand Nagri area on Diwali.

(Credit: Wikimedia)

WORLD NEWS

Bangladesh tribunal sentences ex-PM Sheikh Hasina to death for crimes against humanity

International Affairs Correspondent

A Bangladeshi war-crimes tribunal has sentenced former Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, to death in absentia. She was found guilty of crimes against humanity committed during last year's mass uprising that toppled her government.

The Dhaka-based International Crimes Tribunal delivered the verdict under heavy security on November 17. Hasina, who fled to India in August 2024, was ruled to have borne command responsibility for widespread abuses during the demonstrations. In its 453-page judgement, the three-member panel led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder said Hasina acted as the "superior commander of all the atrocities." The tribunal added that the offences had occurred "in her cool knowledge."

It stated that "all the conditions of being a case of crimes against humanity were proved." The case had been brought by the interim government that assumed power after the student-led revolt, which ended the Awami League's 15-year rule.

Former Home Minister, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, also abroad, was sentenced to death. Former police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun received five years in prison after admitting involvement.

The court ordered the seizure of all property belonging to Hasina and Kamal. Chief prosecutor Mohammad Tajul Islam said victim compensation would be funded by these assets. He emphasised that the trial had been fully open, telling reporters: "The justice and verdict were presented as a transparent process, and anyone across the world could come and check."

With Hasina still in India, Bangladesh has signalled its intention to seek her return. Islam said the government could "utilise the extradition treaty with India and execute the punishment, or can go to Interpol to bring Hasina to Bangladesh."

Outside the court, relatives of those killed during the upheaval demanded swift enforcement, including Mir Snigdho, the twin brother of a slain protest coordinator, who said families "will only be pleased after Hasina is brought home from India and the verdict is executed."

Hasina condemned the ruling from exile, calling it "biased and politically motivated."

In a five-page statement, she said the death sentence was the interim government's attempt to "nullify the Awami League as a political force." She added: "I am not afraid to face my accusers in a proper tribunal where the evidence can be weighed and tested fairly."



She also said she had challenged the authorities to bring their allegations before the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Hasina maintained she was "very proud of [her] government's record on human rights and development."

The interim authorities have levelled five charges against Hasina and her aides, including crimes against humanity. These relate to their response to the nationwide protests that left more than 1,400 people dead. The Foreign Ministry urged New Delhi to return Hasina and Kamal. It warned that "it would be a grave act of unfriendly behaviour and a travesty of justice for any other country to grant asylum to these individuals convicted of crimes against humanity."

The ministry said India had an obligation under the bilateral extradition treaty to hand them over.

India's Foreign Ministry said only that it had "noted the verdict," adding that as a close neighbour, it remained committed to "peace, democracy, inclusion and stability" in Bangladesh and would "engage constructively with all stakeholders."

Opposition groups that opposed Hasina's rule welcomed the ruling. Salahuddin Ahmed of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party said, "justice has been established," describing the judgment as a milestone and adding that although "this sentence is not enough considering the crimes," it would serve as a warning "so that no government can become fascist in the future."

Photo: Sheikh Hasina, former Prime Minister of Bangladesh, has been sentenced to death in absentia. A war crimes tribunal found her guilty of crimes against humanity during last year's mass uprising that toppled her government.

(Credit: Russell Watkins/DFID/CC)

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

Ayaan Syed: England's youngest U17 volleyball star

The Muslim News speaks to 14-year-old Ayaan Syed from Chelmsford, Essex, the youngest athlete ever selected for England's Under-17 volleyball squad. What started as a lockdown pastime—hitting a ball around the garden with his father and sister—has grown into an exceptional sporting rise. Ayaan's talent and discipline have taken him from casual family rallies to the international stage. His early milestones include winning the U15 UKBT 2024 Beach Volleyball Championship, three years representing the East Region U15s, and competing nationally for Boswells Volleyball Club across U15, U16, and U18 levels. Most recently, he helped England claim bronze at the NEVZA Championships in Denmark, sealing a tense five-set victory 15–13. In conversation with The Muslim News, Ayaan reflects on his journey, his faith, his ambitions, and what it means to represent both his British and Muslim identity on the court.

What drew you to volleyball? My dad used to play when he was in school and university. When I was younger, I played a lot of sports, and during COVID my sister and I tried volleyball with my father coaching us. Just started playing in the garden. Once COVID restrictions were over, we looked for a local club I was naturally quite good, so we just carried on from there, committing to playing on a weekly basis, aiming to get better and improve.

How did you react to being selected for England U17 at 14? I was happy, but I also knew that even if I hadn't been selected, I would have still been okay. I believe that whatever happens is part of Allah's (SWT) plan and is predetermined as what is right and best for me. I was content that this decision was the correct path for me. Whether I got selected or not, I would have been okay.

What is your proudest moment? My proudest moments are the life lessons. I've learned that you must stay present, control your emotions, and focus on what you can control, rather than the past or the future. I've learned that everything is up to Allah (SWT) and in His hands. I put my faith in Him, play my best volleyball in the present.

How do you see your role on the court? I see myself as a playmaker. In every rally I touch the ball, and I enjoy distributing it and making decisions about who receives it and when. It feels like a chess game, developing decision-making under pressure.

Who are your sports role models? Kobe Bryant. I loved his work ethic and his mindset; he believed it was a numbers game, if you train more hours than others, you're going to succeed. That's something I discovered when I set my goal two years ago to make the England team. I knew exactly how much I needed to train a week and the required level. I set that goal, and I focused on it and did the work. His mindset helps ground me during tough moments.

What are your long-term goals? To be offered a scholarship in the USA. Having my university fees paid without the cost being a burden on my family. I'd also like to go to the USA for the experience and the lifestyle of being a student-athlete, which would be a big challenge that I would enjoy every minute of.

How has volleyball helped you grow? Volleyball has given me self-reassurance and strengthened my faith in trusting Allah (SWT). I know that whatever happens is all up to Him; He knows what is right and best for me. Volleyball has provided proof of these lessons through real-life experience, making mistakes, not being selected for things, and reinforcing my trust that eventually it will all work out.

As a British South Asian Muslim succeeding in a sport less common in your community, what does it mean to represent your country? It's empowering; I feel like a trailblazer. I want to set a clear pathway for others from my background so that they too can achieve the goals they set out. Your race or background does not set you apart or prevent you from achieving the goals you set.



What does it feel representing England? Fulfilment, contentment, and feeling proud to represent my country.

What does your training week involve? On Mondays, I train twice: with the U16s, followed by a U18 session in Chelmsford with the England coach, running from 5:45 pm to 9:15 pm. On Tuesdays, I train once, from 8 pm to 10 pm. On Wednesdays, I train with the men's Essex team from 7:30 pm to 9 pm. On Sundays, I assist in the evening from 5 pm to 8 pm and then train from 8 pm to 10 pm.

How do you balance school, training, and tournaments? It isn't easy. I plan my week carefully, and in the times I'm not training, I do my homework.

What key challenges have you faced? Staying positive and motivated. What fuels me is knowing that pain means progression, putting my trust in Allah (SWT), and knowing he didn't put me into the world to be average or just 'good'. To reach my goals, I must become comfortable being uncomfortable. These lessons apply both inside and outside volleyball.

How crucial has your family and community's support been? Monumental. The love shown by my family always reassures me that, no matter what, I'll always have a safe space with them.

Can you explain the importance of your fundraising campaign? Sadly, volleyball isn't funded the same way as football, and we must pay for everything, even our kit. The camps, travel, and expenses going overseas and the UK registration fees all add up. I get tremendous support from my Chelmsford and Boswells Volleyball clubs. They help ensure my costs are low but at England level it adds up. I know that without financial support, progress will become difficult.

What's your advice for young athletes aiming for the national level? No dream is too big. The only way to achieve your goals is through hard work and putting your faith in Allah (SWT).

- **To support Ayaan's volleyball journey donate here**

Photo courtesy of Ayaan Syed

Interview by Elham Asaad Buaras

HOME NEWS

Muslim abstinence from alcohol saves the UK £1.62 billion per year, reports Equi

Iqbaal Abdi

A newly published report by think tank Equi stated the UK could benefit by adopting successful British Muslim-led initiatives in providing alcohol-free spaces. The report found abstinence from alcohol among Muslims saves the NHS £1.62 billion per year. The total cost of alcohol in the UK is £40 billion, translating to £1,074 per tax-paying resident every year, Equi reported. From this cost, £5.89 billion accounts for the NHS cost of alcohol misuse. With estimates from England alone indicating that 609,416 adults were alcohol dependent, this misuse increases the risks of liver damage, impacts decision-making, slows reflexes and can lead to alcohol poisoning.

In addition, alcohol misuse has great ramifications on families and local communities. In 2022, there were an estimated 6,800 casualties and 300 deaths resulting from drink-driving incidents across Britain. In addition, Equi suggested approximately 25 to 50% of domestic abuse cases in the UK, particularly gender-based violence, can be attributed to alcohol use. The use of alcohol has also been identified as a key factor in the break-up of families, exacerbating the number of children who are placed under the care system.

However, Equi found that there is a downward trend in drinking habits in the UK. The report explained that there is a generational difference in the consumption of alcohol in the UK. The report stated, 'Individuals aged 16-24 in England are more likely to be non-drinkers, whereas people in their 50s and 60s in England, Wales and Scotland were the least likely to be non-drinkers.

The shifting attitudes towards alcohol can be attributed to a number of factors, including social media influencers promoting healthy lifestyles and the fear of being posted under the influence. The ramifications of these changing attitudes towards alcohol are a contributing factor to the decline of late-night venues and pubs. Equi specified that 'British pubs will close at a rate of one a day this year, with more than 15,000 pubs having closed since 2000', thus hindering avenues for social interaction and community-building. The impact of faith and ethnic differences on the consumption of alcohol is also highlighted by Equi. For example, 90% of people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage, who make up the largest Muslim ethnic groups in the UK, were found to be non-drinkers, compared to 9% of the general white British population. Non-drinkers, including Muslims and young people, save the government an estimated £7.46 billion per year.

The economic benefits from fostering and promoting low drinking or abstinence are huge, with the potential of alleviating NHS debt and balancing expenditure.

Moreover, benefits can expand to educational, work and social settings. The late-night scene could be rejuvenated by alcohol-free spaces staying open later, complementing trends of decreased consumption of alcohol in younger generations and Muslims. Equi suggests the government could invest in keeping museums and tourist attraction sites open for longer hours, drawing on recent success in Turkiye.

Additionally, shifting social activities away from universities and workplaces could help reduce the feelings of exclusion experienced by some Muslims and individuals who prefer alcohol-free environments. Equi reported, 'a survey by Movendi found that 76% of workers in the UK would like to see alcohol-free workplace gatherings.' Given this figure, the government should support the shift towards increased sobriety in society

The report recommended seven policies to lower alcohol misuse and its costs and promote low consumption or abstinence, in line with recent trends. For example, introducing a minimum unit pricing (MUP) which puts a base price per unit of alcohol sold, could save the government an estimated £2.52 billion a year according to Equi.

Furthermore, ensuring the labelling on alcoholic drinks are more user-friendly would enable buyers to make a better-informed choice on their consumption.

Lastly, drawing on faith-led initiatives that spread awareness on alcohol dependency in a culturally and faith-sensitive approach, in collaboration with civil society organisations and the government, could lead to effective mitigation of alcohol misuse in communities.

Iqbaal Abdi,
Graduate in Politics & International Relations



GAZA SIEGE - RELATED COVERAGE

Palestine 36 premieres in London, confronting Britain's colonial legacy

By Iqbaal Abdi



On October 22, Palestine 36 premiered in the UK, co-hosted by Britain Owes Palestine - an advocacy group based in London. Directed by award-winning Annemarie Jacir, Palestine 36 aims to amend revisionist accounts of Palestinian history.

Set during the 1936-39 Arab Revolts, the film follows Yusuf, a young man whose initial passivity towards colonial rule gives way to political awakening under the hand of the Crown, which shatters his aspiration, home and family.

Yusuf is depicted as an ambitious man from a village, captivated by the allure of the metropolis of Jerusalem, where he works. Yusuf is employed by a middle-class man, Sir Amir, and his wife – Kholoud, a journalist who uses the alias Ahmed Canaani to publish articles on British bias towards Jewish settlers.

Through Yusuf's point of view, the differing treatment of rural and urban Palestinians, reflecting the British 'Divde and Rule' policy that distinguishes between 'good' subservient subjects and rebels. The middle-class urban Palestinians are seemingly treated with more respect compared with their rural counterparts. In contrast, the peasantry farming class are subjugated to British colonial rule more harshly - beaten, arrested and extrajudicially killed by officers, with farming land being confiscated and gifted to settlers.

Additionally, Palestine 36 depicts the nuanced approaches to colonial rule. While some urban, middle-class Palestinians, such as Sir Amir, being in favour of political engagement with the British Mandate and Zionist representatives, the farming class prefer militant action in their struggle for liberation. Over time, the film reveals a growing realisation among Palestinians of all classes that freedom will not be granted; Britain will always prioritise Jewish settler rights over their autonomy.

Palestine 36 ends on the poignant reminder of the war crimes committed against Palestinians. The massacre of Yusuf's village mirrors historical accounts of the Massacre of Al-Bassa in 1938, where people were killed, mutilated and tortured by British soldiers. Despite their pain, the defiance of Yusuf's villagers depicts the strong ties Palestinians feel with their land, exceeding their fear of death. Annemarie Jacir's final scene demonstrates how this tie to the soil of Palestine is intergenerationally felt, establishing the cross-generational devotion of Palestinian resistance against occupation.

English actor Billy Howle, who stars as British diplomat Thomas Hopkins, states he "can't ever unsee or unlearn what I have" during a trip he took to the West Bank as preparation for his role. Howle adds the British Mandate "is one of many instances in which the British left behind something appalling and then made no effort, no attempt, at the very least, to make a formal apology". To correct wrongdoings, Howle suggested that colonial and Palestinian history be taught as part of the mandatory national curriculum.

Actress Yasmine Al-Massri, who plays the role of Kholoud, expressed a similar sentiment. Al-Massri, who is of Palestinian heritage, when asked what Palestine 36 meant to her, replied that "this is not only about a movie. It's an invitation for us to think together, to have that conversation. We have to start with education".

Legal scholar and adviser to Britain Owes Palestine, Dr Victor Kattan, stated that "it's essential that the British public understands the historical roots of the present. Only through acknowledging this past can we hope to contribute meaningfully to a just future".

Recognising Britain's role in the Palestinian struggle, Britain Owes Palestine has submitted a legal petition stating that (1) Britain's mandate to rule Palestine was unlawful, (2) Britain's oppression of the Palestinian people was unlawful and (3) Britain abandoned Palestine, creating the conditions for the country's violent partition. The 430-page petition was submitted to the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Ministry of Defence and Attorney General, with the key petitioner being 91-year-old Munib Masri, whose life mirrors the fictional character of Yusuf in many ways.

The petition calls for three main demands. First, for the Prime Minister to issue a formal apology to Palestinians over the rule of the British Mandate between 1918 and 1948, the declassification of documents that remain concealed from public scrutiny; and third, for reparations to be made to Palestinians. Dr Kattan stated that the reparations could take different forms, such as the inclusion of Palestinian history in the national curriculum.

Palestine 36, alongside the legal petition, aims to spark national discourse on Britain's role in the region and its responsibilities towards the people of Palestine. To this day, the legacies of the British mandate form the foundations of the discriminatory and oppressive policies enshrined in Israel's statute book.

Photo: Billy Howle, who stars as British diplomat Thomas Hopkins; Dr Victor Kattan, legal scholar and adviser to Britain Owes Palestine; and Yasmine Al-Massri, who plays journalist Kholoud, at the London premiere of Palestine 36.
(Credit: Gretel Ensignia)

Iqbaal Abdi,
Graduate in Politics & Intl Relations

Over 300 writers and public figures announce boycott of New York Times opinion section over Gaza coverage



Elham Asaad Buaras

More than 300 writers, scholars, and public figures announced on October 27 that they will boycott the *New York Times* Opinion section, citing what they describe as biased coverage of the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Signatories include Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, authors Sally Rooney and Rupi Kaur, activist Greta Thunberg, Emmy-winner Hannah Einbinder, and a range of journalists, artists, and past Times contributors such as Mona Chalabi, Mosab Abu Toha, and Nan Goldin.

The boycott, coordinated by a coalition of organisations including Writers Against the War on Gaza (WAWOG), Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM), and others, pledges that participants will refuse to contribute to the Times Opinion section until the newspaper addresses its coverage of Palestine.

The group has issued three demands: an internal investigation into alleged anti-Palestinian bias, a retraction of the disputed investigation "Screams Without Words", and the publication of an editorial calling for a US arms embargo on Israel.

In a joint statement, the signatories wrote, "As past contributors as well as novelists, essayists, scholars, lawyers, poets, political analysts, and public figures covered in the pages of the Times, we decline this invitation to participate in what Ghassan Kanafani called 'a conversation between the sword and the neck.'"

The letter alleges that *The New York Times* has reprinted statements from Israeli officials without verification, altered coverage at the request of pro-Israel groups, and instructed reporters to avoid terms such as "slaughter," "ethnic cleansing," and "occupied territory."

The signatories argue that while Israeli officials' claims are treated as fact, reports of alleged genocide are relegated to opinion pieces and debated rather than reported as news.

Several past contributors commented on the boycott. Sophie Lewis stated, "As things currently stand, when it publishes us, the Times ultimately buys our complicity in this settler-colonial holocaust… Today, and until the demands of this boycott are met, I stand with the Palestinian people, and with writers of conscience all over the world, in withholding my labour from an institution that currently deserves to go down in history as another 'Radio Rwanda.'"

Mohammed El-Kurd, a New York Times bestseller and signatory, added, "The Opinion section is where the paper creates plausible deniability for its anti-Arab racism and its complicity in genocide… They treat the lies of the Israeli government as fact in News coverage yet render the genocide debatable in Opinion."

The boycott comes as Israel continues airstrikes on Gaza despite announcements of a ceasefire, with organisers calling on the newspaper to be held accountable for its reporting.

(Photo credit: Writers Against the War on Gaza)

Bob Vylan frontman wins apology over false Nazi salute claim after 'death to the IDF' backlash



Nadine Osman

Pascal Robinson, the frontman of the award-winning punk duo Bob Vylan, has received a full public apology and substantial damages from the Manchester Evening News (MEN) after the outlet falsely accused him of performing Nazi salutes, in a case his legal team linked directly to the backlash over the band's pro-Palestine activism. The defamatory claim was published amidst heightened scrutiny of the band, who faced a police investigation and show cancellations after Robinson led a chant of "death to the IDF" during their Glastonbury 2025 set. The MEN article, dated October 6 and headlined "Jewish leaders and MPs 'deeply concerned' over Bob Vylan gig in Manchester," alleged Robinson had "performed Nazi salutes on stage."

This accusation was described by his legal representatives at Rahman Lowe Solicitors as "extremely serious and damaging." In a statement, solicitor Zillur Rahman contextualised the error, noting, "This was a grossly irresponsible allegation… falsely suggesting that an artist whose entire career is rooted in anti-racism and social justice was performing a Nazi salute. In fact, our client merely drew attention to the genocide in Gaza."

In reality, the gesture was a sun salutation, an established part of the band's pre-show ritual. This practice involves a guided period of light stretching and meditation, during which Robinson raises his left arm skyward while placing his right hand over his heart, turning to face all four corners of the venue.

Reach plc, the publisher of the MEN, has now issued a full correction and apology on its website and official social media channels. The publisher has acknowledged the gesture was a sun salutation, paid substantial damages, covered Robinson's legal costs, and committed to never repeating the allegation.

The apology states, "Our article… included a statement that the band Bob Vylan had 'performed Nazi salutes on stage'. The band's singer, Pascal Robinson, has informed us – and we accept – that the gesture in question was in fact a sun salutation, performed by him as part of 'guided light stretching and meditation' at the start of all Bob Vylan shows. We are happy to correct the record and apologise to Mr Robinson, and Bob Vylan, for the error."

Speaking after the settlement, Robinson expressed his outrage at the mischaracterisation. "To have something rooted in mindfulness, peace and connection distorted into a symbol of hate was both painful and outrageous," he said. "Our art has always stood against oppression in all its forms, racism, fascism, and discrimination, and we will never stop using our platform to speak truth to power. We're grateful to Rahman Lowe for defending our integrity. The truth matters, and we're glad it's now been recognised."

The band, known for fierce commentary on inequality, continues its tour, having recently rescheduled the Manchester and Leeds dates following political pressure.

Photo: Bob Vylan frontman Pascal Robinson
(Credit: Rahman Lowe Solicitors)



AIPAC-tracking activists forced into open as Israel lobby's grip on Democrats falters

Elham Asaad Buaras

The founders of a popular X account that tracks pro-Israel lobby funding in US politics have revealed their identities following a coordinated harassment and doxing campaign, a development that comes amid rising political tension over Washington's stance on Israel.

Casey Kennedy and Cory Archibald, co-founders of the transparency initiative @TrackAIPAC, said they decided to go public during an interview on Breaking Points, the independent online news programme on November 11 after their personal information began circulating online. They allege the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) attempted to discredit their work before anonymous accounts published their private details. "They were tagging us, replying to our posts, quoting us, trying to invalidate our data," Kennedy said. "It was very obviously organised."

Their disclosure coincides with a broader shift in US politics. For decades, AIPAC enjoyed strong bipartisan support, shaping congressional attitudes toward Israel and helping secure billions in military aid. Yet criticism has grown, even from within Congress. Former Congressman Brian Baird, who said he "had admired Israel since [he] was a kid" but became increasingly disillusioned, argued that when key votes occur, the question is often not what is right for the



US, but "How is AIPAC going to score this?"

He pointed to a 2009 House resolution condemning the Goldstone Report, a UN investigation into the 2008–09 Gaza War documenting alleged war crimes by both Israel and Hamas. Baird was one of the few to oppose the resolution, recalling: "We have member after member coming to the floor to vote on a resolution they've never read, about a report they've never seen, in a place they've never been."

The Goldstone Report concluded that Israel's operations in Gaza caused extensive civilian casualties and destruction, while also criticising Hamas's rocket attacks. Israel rejected the report as biased, and Congress, under heavy pressure from AIPAC, voted overwhelmingly to denounce it. Baird warned that uncritical alignment with Israeli policy undermines both Israel's long-term security and its moral integrity, arguing that many supporters are "backing policies" such as the killing of civilians that are "ultimately, destructive for the country."

Support for AIPAC is now showing signs of strain, particularly among younger and progressive Democrats as Israel's Gaza offensive continues. Even moderates are distancing themselves. Representative Seth Moulton, previously considered reliably pro-Israel, recently rejected AIPAC's endorsement, saying he remained a "friend of Israel, but not of its current government."

The shift is increasingly visible on Capitol Hill. Representative Hakeem Jeffries, the House Democratic minority leader, recently accepted an endorsement from J Street, a centre-left lobby advocating a two-state solution—a rare break from AIPAC's line. Democratic attendance at AIPAC's annual Israel trip has plunged, and some lawmakers are refusing its campaign donations. Legislation opposed by AIPAC, including proposals to restrict weapons sales to Israel, is gaining Democratic support.

Public opinion is moving as well. A Data for Progress survey found nearly a third of voters in New York's 15th congressional district view AIPAC unfavourably, while CNN exit polling showed almost half of voters backing democratic socialist Zohran Mamdani were influenced by his criticism of Israel's actions in Gaza. In New York, the issue is reshaping campaigns: former state legislator Michael Blake, once an AIPAC supporter, is challenging Congressman Ritchie Torres, accusing him of prioritising the lobby over local issues such as housing.

For @TrackAIPAC, now operating as Citizens Against AIPAC Corruption, the changing climate has increased interest in their work. The group analyses campaign finance records to highlight financial ties between US politicians and the lobby. "The reason our officials keep towing this line is because they're in the pocket of foreign interests who pressure them to do so," Archibald said. "Our goal is to make working with AIPAC a political liability."

The initiative has amassed almost 400,000 followers, drawing increasing attention in Washington. But its visibility has come at a cost. "Transparency is the one thing they can't control," Kennedy said. "If voters start seeing who really funds their representatives, AIPAC's grip starts to slip." AIPAC rejects such criticism. Spokesperson Marshall Wittmann accused opponents of "abandoning friends to grab headlines" and stressed that the organisation is "funded and directed by Americans."

Still, AIPAC's political influence remains formidable. Its PAC spent $28 million in Democratic primaries last year, including $14 million to help defeat Jamaal Bowman, one of Congress's most outspoken critics of Israel.

With the 2026 midterm elections approaching, that spending will again be put to the test. For Kennedy and Archibald, the fight is about both transparency and democracy. "We're not just tracking donations," Archibald said. "We're tracking how democracy gets bought."

(Photo credit: Screengrab/Breaking Points CC)

Top Israeli army lawyer quits after leaking evidence of Palestinian detainee gang rape

Elham Asaad Buaras

The Israeli military's top legal official, Major-General Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi, has resigned after admitting she authorised the leak of video evidence showing the gang rape of a Palestinian detainee,an act that has exposed deep divisions over wartime conduct and ignited a political firestorm.

Her resignation on November 1 comes amid mounting evidence of systematic abuse at the Sde Teiman detention centre, where the assault occurred, and after facing what she described in her resignation letter as an "illegitimate and false campaign of delegitimization" from far-right ministers.

The graphic surveillance footage, leaked to Channel 12 news in August 2024, shows soldiers at Sde Teiman grabbing and leading away a blindfolded Palestinian prisoner before surrounding him with riot shields to block the view. The subsequent indictment describes a 15-minute assault during which soldiers "kicked the detainee, stomped on him, stood on his body, hit him and pushed him all over his body, including with clubs, dragged his body along the ground, and used a taser gun on him, including on his head."

The victim sustained life-threatening injuries. Medical documents obtained by *Haaretz* indicate that he suffered a ruptured bowel, severe anal and lung trauma, and broken ribs, later requiring surgery. The decision to investigate the rape provoked immediate outrage from Israel's far-right. As military police questioned soldiers, protesters—including Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu—stormed the Sde Teiman base in support of the accused.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir directly targeted Tomer-Yerushalmi, writing, "The Military Advocate General, take your hands off the reservists!" Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich was equally defiant, insisting on social media that the accused soldiers should be regarded as "heroes, not villains." He also demanded "an immediate criminal investigation to locate the leakers of the trending video that was intended to harm the reservists and that caused tremendous damage to Israel in the world."

Despite the evidence, the military prosecution indicted only five soldiers, none for rape, but for "severely abusing" the detainee. A United Nations commission reviewing the decision to downgrade the charges warned that the move "will inevitably result in a more lenient punishment" if the soldiers are convicted.

Human rights organisations say the case reflects broader structural impunity. Human Rights Watch has repeatedly accused Israel of "systemic impunity" for abuses against Palestinians, arguing that the military justice system routinely fails to investigate high-level policies or hold perpetrators accountable for serious crimes. Amnesty International has similarly documented what it terms a widespread pattern of torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees. In a recent report, Amnesty said that conditions in detention facilities, including Sde Teiman, demonstrate "a harrowing pattern of torture, including severe beatings, humiliation, and sexual violence," which it classifies as war crimes. The organisation also condemned the political intimidation of legal officials as a key obstacle to accountability.

The Sde Teiman case appears far from isolated. A UN report noted that detainees at the facility, including children, were "regularly shackled, forced into stress positions, denied toilets and showers and beaten." It also documented instances of sexual violence, including "the insertion of objects, electric shocks and rape."

More grim evidence emerged last month when Israel returned the bodies of Palestinians who had died in custody. Palestinian officials reported that at least 135 of the "mutilated" corpses had been held at Sde Teiman. Several "had been left with blindfolds on, and some had their hands still tied behind their back. One had a rope around its neck."

In her resignation statement, Tomer-Yerushalmi defended her actions, saying she leaked the footage to counter "false propaganda directed against the military law enforcement authorities." She expressed deep concern at the political environment, lamenting that the "basic understanding, that there are actions which must never be taken even against the vilest of detainees, no longer convinces everyone."

Her critics celebrated her departure. Defence Minister Israel Katz, who had pressured her to step down, declared, "Anyone who spreads blood libels against IDF troops is unfit to wear the army's uniform." Ben-Gvir welcomed her resignation, calling for wider accountability, while Smotrich accused her and the judiciary of promoting what he termed an "anti-Semitic blood libel."

The resignation of the military's top lawyer underscores a deepening conflict within Israel, pitting the principles of legal accountability against a powerful political faction that views scrutiny as betrayal. Meanwhile, the trial of the five soldiers accused of abuse continues.



UK invests in AI to tackle drug-resistant superbugs



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being increasingly used in the pharmaceutical industry to develop new drugs. By analysing large amounts of data, AI can help identify compounds most likely to become successful treatments, significantly speeding up the drug development process. The power of AI is now being focused on the growing medical threat from antimicrobial resistance (AMR) infections, with the UK announcing that it has committed £45 million to a major AI-driven initiative to develop new antibiotics and other treatments for infections caused by microorganisms that have developed resistance to standard treatments. Led by the pharmaceutical company GSK and the Fleming Initiative at Imperial College London, the project will focus on common infections that cannot easily be treated with standard medications.

AMRs occur when microorganisms (bacteria, viruses and fungi) evolve to resist the drugs that are used to treat them, such as antibiotics (for bacterial infections, referred to as antibiotic resistance). Drug resistance means that some infections that were once treatable become very difficult to treat and can even become deadly; some bacteria no longer respond to standard antibiotics making conditions like pneumonia, urinary tract infections and post-surgical infections a serious medical concern. For many years now, cases of multidrug-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), have been an issue within hospitals, and are a leading cause of hospital-acquired infections.

The World Health Organisation has declared AMR a rising global health emergency and predicts that AMR will cause 8.2 million deaths annually by 2050, up from 4.71 million in 2021. In the UK alone over 35,000 deaths per year are linked to AMR. The rise in AMR is linked to the overuse of antibiotics, patients not completing their antibiotic course and poor infection control within healthcare settings, meaning resistant microorganisms can spread within the hospital setting and wider community.

Yet despite the growing threat, very few new antibiotics are being developed, and pharmaceutical companies have reduced investment and research due to the low profitability of making drugs in this area compared to more lucrative therapeutic areas such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

To support research into new treatments for AMR the UK is responding with a coordinated national strategy, including £85 million in government funding for AMR research, combined with £45 million from GSK for AI-driven drug discovery with the Fleming Initiative - Global leadership in piloting subscription models for antibiotic development.

As part of the initiative six new research programmes will launch in early 2026, targeting drug-resistant infections using advanced AI and supercomputing.

One group of bacteria that will be targeted is Gram-negative bacteria, that includes E. coli and Klebsiella pneumoniae. Gram-negative bacteria are difficult to treat due to their cell structure, they have an outer membrane that acts as a protective barrier controlling what comes in and out of the cell, they can block antibiotics from entering and can also pump out any antibiotics that do enter, meaning they cannot accumulate to a dosage that can be effective.

Six areas of research will be targeted using advanced AI & supercomputing

1. Gram-negative bacteria (e.g. E. coli, Klebsiella pneumoniae)
2. Multidrug-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (including MRSA)
3. Aspergillus fungal infections
4. Global surveillance and prescribing strategies
5. Resistance mechanisms & drug design
6. Open data sharing platforms for AMR research

To develop new treatments the research teams will perform experiments using molecules with different chemical structures and record what can get inside and stay inside these bacteria. This data will then be used by the AI, so it can learn what compounds are successful in entering the bacteria, which can then be used to help select and develop compounds that will be able to enter and persist inside a Gram-negative bacterium. The hope is that this will convert years' worth of research into a strategy that will help scientists quickly identify the chemical structure that is needed and modify potential antibiotics to bypass the bacteria's defences.

The AI will also be fed data to help predict and map where AMRs is occurring and likely to spread to help manage and stay on top of outbreaks.

The project is also looking beyond bacteria to use AI to tackle the rise of deadly fungal infections, starting with Aspergillus mould. The spores of this fungus are usually harmless, but they can become deadly in people with weakened immune systems.

Other research groups across the globe are also using AI to develop much needed new treatments for infectious diseases. Once hailed as a miracle treatment, antibiotics have prevented millions of deaths over the last century, but the rise of antibiotic resistance has meant that many once treatable diseases are again becoming deadly. New drugs are badly needed; it is hoped that AI can help speed up the process and cut down on the costs by selecting compounds that are most likely to be successful early in the drug development pipeline.

(Feature photo credit: DC Studio/Freepik)

Rachel Kayani,
Science Tutor and Writer

ENVIRONMENT

Environment Agency warns England faces devastating 2026 drought

England is heading towards a severe nationwide drought in 2026, as a convergence of climate pressures, depleted water reserves, and rising demand pushes the country to the brink of a crisis that experts say only a significantly wetter-than-average winter can avert.

The warning comes in the Environment Agency's Drought Prospects Report for Spring 2026, published on November 14, which starkly concludes that England's water system is now so strained that even an average winter may not be enough to prevent major shortages next year.

The alarm is rooted in an exceptional year of dry and extreme weather. The spring of 2025 was the driest in 132 years, followed by the hottest summer since records began in 1884. Four intense heatwaves scorched the country, leaving soils parched, rivers depleted, and reservoirs drained. Between January and October, England received just 83 % of its long-term average rainfall, while reservoir stocks have fallen to a troubling 65.8 %, well below the seasonal norm of 77.4 %.

"The data presents a clear warning," said Helen Wakeham, Director of Water at the Environment Agency. "There will be a drought next year unless we get sustained rainfall through the winter. The ultimate severity, however, will be determined by both the weather and the concerted actions we take now to manage our finite water resources."

But the early signs are bleak. Seasonal forecasts from the Met Office indicate a "higher-than-usual likelihood" of dry conditions between November and January. The shift is heavily influenced by the growing probability of a La Niña event, a global climate pattern linked to cooler Pacific waters. Historically, La Niña winters are associated with below-average rainfall in southern and eastern England, a trend that could further compound the existing hydrological deficits.

The Environment Agency outlines three potential rainfall scenarios for the crucial October to March recharge period, each carrying sobering implications. An average winter, with 100 % of long-term rainfall, has a 28 to 42 % chance of occurring and is the bare minimum needed for most of England to recover. Even under that scenario, parts of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire would remain in extended dry conditions.

A dry winter, at 80 % of average rainfall and with an 18 to 29 % probability, would sharply intensify drought conditions, placing a vast swathe of the country from Dorset to East Yorkshire in severe water stress. The worst case, a very dry winter at just 60 % of average rainfall, has a low statistical probability of 2 to 6 % but would plunge all of England into drought by spring.

When factoring in La Niña, the outlook deteriorates further. In the South East, the probability of a dry winter rises from 29 % to 38 %. In the South West, the likelihood of receiving the essential average rainfall required for recovery falls from 32 % to just 18 %. Even an average winter would not be enough to repair deeper groundwater deficits. Chalk aquifers, which sustain many of England's rivers through dry months, require at least 120 % of normal winter rainfall to return to healthy levels. The report warns that during La Niña winters, the probability of notably or exceptionally low groundwater by March multiplies by 2.4, while the risk of notably low river flows increases 1.7 times. This equates to a 32 % chance of significantly depleted groundwater and a 22 % chance of low river flows by the end of March 2026.

The strain is already visible across the country. Over the summer, the Canal & River Trust was forced to close 20 % of its network. Hosepipe bans remain in place for eight million people. Farmers report reduced harvests and poor grass growth, prompting warnings about winter feed shortages for livestock. Wildlife has also been hit hard, with declining breeding success among wetland birds, and stress signs appearing in vulnerable species such as great crested newts and natterjack toads. Even ancient trees are suffering from the prolonged dry spell.

In response, the Environment Agency is calling for accelerated action across sectors. Water companies are urged to prioritise leakage repairs, strengthen customer engagement on water saving, and prepare for winter pipe bursts. Farmers are being encouraged to adopt drought-tolerant crops, fill on-farm reservoirs early, and share water resources with neighbouring holdings to mitigate risk.

Water Minister Emma Hardy linked the unfolding crisis to the broader climate emergency. "Climate change means we will face more frequent, severe droughts and flooding in the years ahead," she said.

"That's why this government is taking decisive action to secure our long-term water resilience, which includes building nine new reservoirs and investing in new pipes to reduce leakage."

Members of the public are being asked to maintain water-saving habits even through winter. Measures such as installing low-flow showerheads, using dual-flush toilets, running full loads in washing machines, and opting for watering cans rather than hoses could, collectively, save millions of litres.

With winter now the only window left for the nation to replenish its reserves, England enters the cold season with its water future delicately poised. Should the rain fail to arrive in sufficient quantity, next year's drought may prove one of the most far-reaching environmental challenges the country has faced in decades.

Elham Asaad Buaras

GAZA-RELATED NEWS

Dutch court allows arms exports to Israel to continue, rejecting appeal by rights groups

Nadine Osman

A Dutch appeals court has rejected a legal challenge brought by human rights organisations seeking to end the Netherlands' export of weapons and military equipment to Israel, a decision that has sparked widespread condemnation from pro-Palestinian groups.

The case, filed by ten NGOs accused the Dutch state of enabling "genocide" in Gaza through arms exports and other forms of military cooperation. The plaintiffs urged the court to impose an immediate halt on all arms and dual-use exports to Israel, including the supply of trained military dogs, and to cease economic engagement with companies operating in illegal Israeli settlements.

This appeal followed a lower court's dismissal of the case last year. The organisations cited the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) landmark interim ruling in January 2024, which found it plausible that Israel is committing acts of genocide in Gaza and ordered it to take measures to prevent further violations.

In its verdict delivered on November 6, the Hague Court of Appeal sided with the Dutch government. While the court acknowledged that "there is a serious risk that Israel will commit genocide against the Palestinian population in Gaza," it concluded that the government possesses "considerable discretion" in shaping foreign and security policy.

The judges ruled that the plaintiffs had not demonstrated that the Dutch state was systematically disregarding human rights considerations in approving arms exports. Consequently, the court declined to issue a comprehensive export ban and ordered the human rights organisations to cover the government's legal expenses.

"Although it is plausible that there is a risk of genocide and serious violations of international law, it is not for the court to dictate what measures the State must take to address this risk," the judgment stated.

In response, the coalition of NGOs expressed profound disappointment, accusing the government of continuing to enable Israel's military campaign in Gaza despite international warnings. The groups stressed that, as a signatory to the 1948 Genocide Convention, the Netherlands is legally obligated to take proactive measures to prevent genocide.

The Dutch government, while rejecting claims of wrongdoing, argued that it carefully assesses all export licenses and has already suspended most arms transfers to Israel. Officials said only limited components for defensive systems, such as the Iron Dome, continue to be approved.

The ruling comes amid a tenuous ceasefire in Gaza. Israel's ongoing military assault, launched in response to the Hamas-led attacks of October 7, 2023, has resulted in the killings of at least 68,875 Palestinians, with more than 170,000 others wounded. Vast areas of the enclave have been reduced to rubble, leaving much of Gaza uninhabitable.

‘A Summer of Division’: British Muslim Trust report reveals escalating wave of ‘anti-Muslim hate’ across the UK

Elham Asaad Buaras

The inaugural report by the British Muslim Trust (BMT) has documented a sharp rise in anti-Muslim hostility across the UK during the summer. Titled *A Summer of Division*, the report, published on November 7, reveals a nationwide escalation in mosque attacks between July and October, describing it as a “sustained national escalation” of hate crimes that transformed public places of worship into targets of nationalist intimidation.

As the first official briefing since the BMT was appointed by the government to monitor anti-Muslim hate, the report recorded 27 verified attacks on 25 mosques across 23 towns and cities, spanning from Scotland to the south coast of England. Far from isolated incidents, the report concludes that the attacks formed part of an evolving national pattern that intensified over time—growing in both frequency and severity—and ultimately culminated in an arson attack with intent to endanger life.

A TIMELINE OF ESCALATION: FROM PROVOCATION TO VIOLENCE

The BMT’s analysis identifies a clear four-month trajectory of radicalisation. The first recorded incident occurred on July 26, when the Wirral Deen Centre in Birkenhead was struck by an air-gun pellet, shattering a window while women and children were inside. The report describes this as a “threshold moment,” marking a shift from online rhetoric to direct physical targeting of Muslim places of worship.

By August, the nature of the incidents had changed dramatically. The report records eight new attacks, the majority of which it categorises as acts of “symbolic intimidation” based on the imagery and messages left at the scenes. In 41% of all cases documented during this period, perpetrators employed overtly nationalist or religious symbols, such as crosses, Union Jacks, St George’s flags, and slogans including “Jesus is King”, to convey ideological hostility and assert cultural dominance over Muslim places of worship.

Examples cited include a man in Hounslow who filmed himself affixing an anti-Muslim sign to a mosque, and an incident in Oxford, where pork products and an Israeli flag were placed at the entrance of a mosque. These acts coincided with the emergence of the “Operation Raise the Colours” campaign, which encouraged the widespread display of national flags. According to BMT analysts, “the timing and imagery were mirrored in attacks on mosques across England,” suggesting a process of “symbolic alignment” between nationalist mobilisation and hate incidents.



September marked the most volatile phase, both in scale and aggression. With nine recorded incidents, the period saw a transition from symbolic provocation to violent physical attacks. The report highlights a series of property offences: a masked break-in at a Huddersfield mosque, and the smashing of windows with a metal pole at a Glasgow mosque while children were present.

This surge coincided with the “Unite the Kingdom” rally in London, led by far-right activist Tommy Robinson, which drew thousands and amplified rhetoric about “taking back Britain.” The BMT identifies a 13-day window from late August to early September during which nine attacks occurred—a third of the total incidents across the four-month period. This, the report concludes, represented “the most concentrated and violent phase of the year,” marking a “tipping point where symbolic hate turned into sustained physical aggression.”

By October, while the overall frequency of incidents stabilised, their intensity reached a new and deeply alarming level. In Watford, three mosques were vandalised within a single week, with one suspect arrested carrying bladed weapons. The most severe attack took place on October 4 in Peacehaven, East Sussex, where the local Community Mosque was deliberately set on fire using accelerants. The Imam narrowly escaped the blaze, and two men were later charged with arson with intent to endanger life.

According to the report, this incident represented “a new and deeply troubling escalation—an apparent intent not merely to intimidate, but to endanger life.” Local Muslims told BMT investigators that they had already felt “abandoned and unprotected” after months of harassment, compounding the psychological toll of the attack.

CORRELATION WITH NATIONALIST CAMPAIGNS

While the BMT emphasises that its data cannot establish direct causation, it identifies what it calls a “striking temporal correlation” between the surge in mosque attacks and the rise of nationalist mobilisation throughout the summer. Both “Operation Raise the Colours” in August and the “Unite the Kingdom” rally in September are cited as key moments when “nationalist sentiment became visually and rhetorically mainstreamed.”

The report states, “While some framed this summer’s campaigns as calls for unity and patriotism, in practice, they coincided with a wave of incidents in which the flag itself became an instrument of nationalist intimidation, used to signal exclusion and drive division.”

In several cases, perpetrators explicitly used national flags and religious symbols as tools of harassment. Victims described these acts as “public messages of exclusion,” aimed at asserting that Muslims “did not belong in the national fabric.”

The BMT found that many within Muslim communities perceived the attacks as “a direct challenge to their sense of belonging, a message that their place in British society was being fundamentally questioned because of their faith.”

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE AND EROSION OF TRUST

Beyond the immediate physical damage, the report documents a growing erosion of confidence in public institutions. Victims and community leaders repeatedly reported limited police follow-up, inadequate online platform response, and a lack of visible government engagement.

According to the BMT, “Muslims do not feel their concerns are addressed adequately. Victims consistently reported limited follow-up from police or online platforms, fuelling a perception that ‘anti-Muslim hatred’ is tolerated or minimised.”

This perceived neglect, the report warns, has compounded trauma and fostered alienation. In Peacehaven, for example, residents described feeling “abandoned and unprotected” even before the arson attack—reflecting a wider sentiment of institutional indifference.

RECOMMENDATIONS: TOWARDS A COORDINATED NATIONAL STRATEGY

In its concluding section, the BMT calls for a “comprehensive and coordinated national strategy” to address what it identifies as a “cross-regional and digitally amplified pattern of hate.” The report urges the establishment of enhanced victim support mechanisms, including rapid response services and trauma counselling for affected communities. It also recommends increased protective security funding for mosques, with particular emphasis on smaller and under-resourced institutions that remain especially vulnerable.

Furthermore, the BMT highlights the need for improved intelligence-sharing between local police forces, national agencies, and civil society partners to detect and prevent coordinated hate incidents more effectively. The report also advocates renewed investment in community cohesion initiatives to rebuild interfaith trust and reaffirm that “mosques are civic anchors serving people of all backgrounds.”

The report concludes with an urgent warning, underscoring the gravity of its findings: “The events of summer 2025 demonstrate how swiftly public discourse can translate into real-world harm. Without a national strategy to counter the convergence of nationalism and hate, Britain risks further erosion of the pluralistic values that underpin its democracy.” It cautions that the failure to act decisively would not only leave Muslim communities vulnerable but also endanger the very principles of equality, safety, and social cohesion upon which the country’s democratic fabric depends.

Photo: The walls surrounding the Epsom Islamic Centre were defaced with offensive graffiti in the early hours of October 14, 2025, part of a wider, escalating wave of anti-Muslim attacks documented in the BMT’s A Summer of Division report.

(Credit: A Summer of Division/BMT)

US ELECTIONS

Historic breakthrough: 38 Muslim Candidates secure unprecedented victories in 2025 US elections

By Elham Asaad Buaras

In a powerful demonstration of growing political integration and influence, American Muslim candidates achieved a record number of electoral victories in the November 4, elections, securing positions from city halls to a pivotal statewide office. According to a provisional tally released by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and its political action arm, CAIR Action, 38 Muslim candidates have clinched confirmed wins. With 76 names on ballots nationwide and several races still undecided or heading for recounts, this figure is anticipated to rise, solidifying a trend of surging Muslim American civic engagement.

The election night was punctuated by several landmark achievements that signal a broadening acceptance and representation of the Muslim community in American politics. The most symbolic victory came in New York City, where Zohran Mamdani secured a historic win to become the metropolis’s first Muslim mayor. His election marks a new chapter for one of the nation’s most prominent political arenas.

However, the most significant breakthrough for national representation occurred in Virginia. Ghazala Firdous



Hashmi, an educator and state senator, was elected Lieutenant Governor, shattering two barriers at once. She becomes the first Muslim and the first Indian American ever elected to a statewide office in the US.

Hashmi’s political ascent has been rapid. She first entered the political fray in 2019, flipping a Republican-held Virginia State Senate seat to become the first Muslim woman in the chamber. After a successful re-election in 2023, her victory on November 4, 2025, propels her into a role of national significance. At 61, she will preside over the Virginia State Senate and hold a critical tie-breaking vote in a chamber where Democrats hold a fragile 20-19 majority.

In her victory speech, Hashmi framed her win as an American story. “This was possible because of the depth and breadth of the opportunities made available in this country and in this commonwealth,” she told supporters. She highlighted her personal journey, rooted in education and perseverance, stating, “I hope my election reminds every child, no matter their faith, colour, or where they come from, that they belong. That they, too, can help build a better America.”

Hashmi’s legislative record established her as a leading progressive voice, having co-sponsored the Right to Contraception Act and championed public education funding, healthcare access, and reproductive rights. She has cited the anti-Muslim policies of the Trump administration, including the travel ban, as a key motivator for her initial run for office. The momentum extended to the Midwest, where Somali American politician Omar Fateh forced a runoff in the Minneapolis mayoral race under the state’s ranked-choice voting system. A state senator since 2021, the first Somali and Muslim to serve in that body, Fateh ran on a democratic socialist platform aligned with Mayor-Elect Mamdani, focusing on economic justice and affordable housing. He has received prominent backing from Congresswoman Ilhan Omar and the Minnesota Democratic–Farmer–Labor Party.In Michigan, a key hub for Arab and Muslim American political power, incumbents solidified their positions. Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud, the city’s first Muslim and Arab American mayor, won a resounding second term with 73 percent of the vote. Meanwhile, in Dearborn Heights, Mo Baydoun, who had been serving as acting mayor, secured a full term with 68 percent of the vote.

In their analysis, CAIR and CAIR Action contextualized these victories as hard-won triumphs against a backdrop of bigotry. The organisations praised the “extraordinary courage and integrity” of every Muslim candidate, noting that many “won despite facing a wave of anti-Muslim hate and organised disinformation.”

“Those who prevailed now carry the trust of their entire communities—regardless of faith—to serve with a commitment to the common good,” the statement read. “At a time when many American Muslim candidates endured slander, harassment, and overt Islamophobia, their strength and dedication to public service send a clear message: bigotry has no place in American politics.”

The groups also signaled a forward-looking strategy, vowing to “mobilise the American Muslim community to reach even greater heights of civic engagement in the 2026 midterm elections.”

Feature photos: Ghazala Firdous Hashmi becomes Virginia’s new lieutenant governor, the first Muslim and Indian American elected to statewide office in the US. Adjacent: Zohran Kwame Mamdani wins the New York City mayoral race, becoming the city’s first Muslim mayor.

.(Credits: Hashmi Campaign/ WikiCommons; Selçuk Acar/AA

Black British Muslims honoured for community impact at 2025 awards

Home Affairs Correspondent

Trailblazers from across the UK were recognised for shattering barriers and inspiring change at the 2025 Black (African/Afro-Caribbean) Muslim Awards, an annual ceremony celebrating the growing influence of Black British Muslims across all sectors and honouring a community redefining excellence, representation, and belonging.

The event in October in London united leading figures from sport, culture, and public life. Organisers emphasised that the evening meant more than accolades.

"These awards are not just about handing out trophies," said Rakin Fetuga, producer of the Black Muslim Awards. "They are about legacy — about visibility, empowerment, and giving our community the flowers they've earned."

Among the honourees was Khadijah Mellah, who made history in 2019 as the trailblazing first hijab-wearing jockey to win a competitive British horse race.

Her remarkable victory in the Magnolia Cup at Goodwood, aged 18, captured national attention. She was named Female Sports Advocate of the Year for her inspiring and transformative work promoting diversity in horse racing through the Riding A Dream Academy.



Illyin Morrison claimed the Women's Advocate 2025 award. A registered midwife and perinatal trauma specialist, Morrison catapulted to prominence after reaching the quarterfinals of The Great British Bake Off in 2024. She now champions improved maternal healthcare and combats racial bias in medicine.

The Business Entrepreneur of the Year award went to Dirie Adan Abdi Abyan, founder of D's Kitchen. What started as a modest Snapchat page showcasing Somali home cooking has blossomed into one of the UK's first Somali-owned fast-food franchises, with two London branches celebrated for their vibrant flavours and community-driven ethos.

Poet, playwright, and spoken-word artist Sukina Noor received the Performing Artist of the Year award for her pioneering contributions to British Muslim arts. Co-founder of the hip-hop duo Poetic Pilgrimage and Bristol's City Poet, Noor is known for her work exploring poetry's transformative power, including her TEDx talk on the subject.

Her theatre productions, Malcolm X (2016) and Afropean/Human Being (2020), were staged at the Royal Flemish Theatre in Brussels. She is also the author of Love & Longing: Yearning for the Face of God and the poetry album Tribe.

The Charity of the Year award went to Solace UK, founded by Aliyah Umm Rayaan, which provides holistic support to revert women across Britain. The organisation offers faith-based counselling and educational programmes to strengthen spiritual resilience and provide community support.

LaYinka Sami, a transformation coach and author, was named Author of the Year. Her debut book, A Beautiful Homecoming (2024), combines self-help and faith-based guidance, encouraging Muslim women to rediscover purpose and peace.

The STEM Champion of the Year award was presented to Zainab Garba-Sani, a health innovation leader at NHS England & NHS Improvement. She was recognised for her work advancing inclusive healthcare technologies and for founding the first DKMS student society at the University of Bradford to increase stem cell donor registration among underrepresented groups.

Running With the Brothers, a London-based grassroots group supporting men from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds through running and mentoring, won the Male Sports Advocate of the Year award.

With a network of more than 500 men, the organisation promotes wellbeing, brotherhood and mental health while tackling social isolation.

In the Male Social Media Influencer category, content creator Mohamed Salad, known online as Princessalad, was recognised for his engaging sports commentary covering African football, the Premier League and the NFL. Ameena Roshae, a professional makeup artist turned content creator, won the Female Social Media Influencer award for her modest fashion content and storytelling about faith, family, and identity, which has earned her millions of followers online.

Additional recognition included Caterer of the Year honours for Amatullah's Food Hut, Journalist/Media Professional of the Year for Aisha Rimi, Philanthropist of the Year for Aishah Hutchinson, and the Outstanding Achievement Award for Ismael Lea South.

The ceremony, hosted by Muneera Pilgrim and Ali Kamara, featured performances by actor and poet Muslim Belal, comedian Fathiya Saleh, and poet Suli Breaks, reflecting the diversity and creativity within the Black Muslim community.

Photo: Khadijah Mellah, winner of the Female Sports Advocate award, and Ameena Roshae, winner of the Social Media Influencer Award, at the African & African-Caribbean Black Muslim Awards 2025.

(Credit: L3K Photography)

Twin sisters lead school fundraising effort for Pakistan flood relief

Home Affairs Correspondent

Six-year-old twins Amal and Ameerah Shikoh have mobilised their primary school, St Francis of Assisi Church of England Primary School in Ingleby Barwick, Stockton-on-Tees, to support flood victims in Pakistan, demonstrating that a strong sense of civic duty can begin at any age.

The sisters' charitable journey began when they were just four, after learning about the devastating 2022 floods in Pakistan. The disaster struck a personal chord, as the girls have extended family in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sialkot. Hearing that children like them had lost homes, belongings, and family members, they felt moved to act.

With the support of their teachers and classmates, they organised their first fundraiser, a cupcake sale that raised £70. It was a small amount, but for such young children it reflected something much deeper. Their mother,



Dr. Aisha Shikoh, recalls: "They were so little, but they understood suffering. They understood that children just like them were hurting. And they believed they could help."

This compassion resurfaced powerfully this year when further floods struck parts of Pakistan. Now older and more confident, the girls helped lead the planning of a more ambitious school fundraiser, speaking with teachers, designing posters, and encouraging classmates to donate, raising £170 for Penny Appeal's flood relief efforts. Their desire to help has also been strengthened by seeing children in Gaza comforting one another despite hardship, reinforcing their belief in offering help wherever they can. The recent fundraiser was entirely the twins' initiative. "They said to me, 'We can't just watch this. We must help,'" Dr. Aisha explained. "What touched me most was that it was entirely their idea."

Their father, Dr Shahzad Shikoh, connects their actions to the family's values. "From a very young age, they've understood that being Muslim means caring for others. To them, humanity comes first, and their faith gives that meaning."

The twins themselves have a clear, simple philosophy. "If someone is hurting, we should help. We are all one family," they said. With their names reflecting their ambitions, Amal, whose name means 'hope', stated, "I want to bring hope to the world!" Ameerah, whose name means 'leader', added, "I will lead the people who give hope!"

Proving their commitment extends beyond emergency relief, the sisters are already planning their next charitable projects. Last Ramadan, they helped pack iftar food packs for local struggling university students, learning that charity is not only financial but also about giving time and kindness. With the next Ramadan approaching, they are brainstorming ideas for a small treat stall with date boxes, handmade Ramadan cards, and a supervised mini henna corner offering simple designs. They are still refining their plans, but their enthusiasm never stops growing.

Their parents hope the story encourages others. "Our children are capable of so much when we trust them, guide them, and nurture their compassion," said Dr Aisha.

Amal and Ameerah continue to prove their commitment to their motto: "If we all help a little, no one has to suffer alone."

(Photos courtesy of Shikoh family)

Far-right extremism tops UK Prevent concerns amid surge in referrals

Home Affairs Correspondent

Far-right extremism has become the primary focus of Britain's anti-radicalisation programme, according to Home Office figures released on November 6, with Prevent referrals reaching record levels last year.

Referrals rose by 27 per cent to 8,778 in 2024–25, the highest since the scheme began. The data reveals a pivotal shift in the UK's extremism landscape. Referrals concerning "Extreme Right-Wing" (ERW) ideology accounted for 21% (1,798) of all cases, surpassing those related to "Islamist Extremism" (IE), which declined to 10% (870). This trend is particularly pronounced among cases deemed serious enough for the specialised Channel programme, where 42% (612 of 1,464) of adopted cases involved ERW concerns, compared to 15% (226) for IE.



Children aged 11 to 15 accounted for more than a third of all referrals, making them the largest age group involved. Nearly 3,200 school-aged children were referred to Prevent last year, highlighting growing concerns about youth vulnerability to extremist influences.

"The increase in right-wing referrals does not surprise us as Prevent referrals have always been a reflection of public anxieties," said Layla Aitlhadj, Director of advocacy group Prevent Watch. "At Prevent Watch we have seen an increase in individuals contacting us as a result of right-wing Prevent referrals where unpalatable views are being treated as matters of counterterrorism rather than as teachable moments."

Mental health continues to play a significant role in Prevent cases, with one in three referrals involving individuals with recorded mental health or neurodiversity conditions. Of these, 1,226 were identified as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Aitlhadj added, "We have always been concerned that Prevent would extend and be justified in other communities without any evidence that Prevent actually stops terrorism."

Educational institutions remain a key source of referrals, accounting for 36 per cent of the total, although the proportion coming from teachers has declined slightly. Police referrals increased by 37 per cent, and those from local authorities rose by 54 per cent. In contrast, referrals from families and community members fell by 25 and 7 per cent respectively.

The West Midlands recorded the highest referral rates in the country, while the North West experienced a notable increase in Channel cases, which more than doubled.

Officials noted that some of the overall rise may be due to administrative changes. A new case management system introduced in May 2024 has affected how referrals are recorded, contributing to an increase in Channel adoptions from 7 to 17 per cent.

External factors also influenced referral numbers. Following the Southport knife attack trial, referrals surged by 82 per cent in the first quarter of 2025. Lord Anderson, the Interim Independent Prevent Commissioner, said media coverage surrounding the case "likely" contributed to the spike.

Photo: Southport, England, July 30, 2024, far-right extremists set a police van alight and surrounded a mosque during riotsreflecting a wider surge in far-right activity across the UK.

(Credit: StreetMic LiveStream/WikiCC

Green Party deputy leader subjected to second Islamophobic attack

Elham Asaad Buaras

Mothin Ali, deputy leader of the Green Party, was subjected to a second Islamophobic attack on October 29, outside Earl's Court station in west London. The latest incident follows an earlier attack in August, when Ali and his children were racially abused while on holiday in Norfolk.

Describing the London encounter on X, Ali wrote, "A memorable night ruined by a racist thug. I was invited to speak at the EuroAsia Curry Awards… it should have been an exciting opportunity. But on my way there… I was subjected to an Islamophobic hate crime. I have now reported it to the police."

According to Ali, a man approached him shouting, "I know you. I've seen all about you online. You should be deported." The attacker then used a racial slur, calling Ali a "f*ing P#ki," while asserting his own whiteness and repeating that Ali should be deported. He came directly up to Ali's face, prompting him to pull out his phone to record the encounter. Only then did the man back off, still threatening to "smash my head in" as he walked away.The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) confirmed it has opened an investigation into the incident, treating it as "racial abuse/presumed hate crime."

Officers are reviewing CCTV footage from the station and video supplied by Ali and have appealed for anyone with information to come forward. No arrests have yet been made. Reflecting on the wider context, Ali wrote: "Sadly, this is too much of a regular experience for Muslims in Britain. As Deputy



Leader of the Green Party, I know how dangerous this hate is and how it drives so many Muslims away from public life." He described the attack as part of a broader pattern of online and offline radicalisation, noting: "This was not random.

His words echoed the racist abuse I see online every day. British men are being radicalised by extremists, politicians, parts of the media, and oligarchs. We have already seen a spike in Islamophobic hate crimes, attacks on places of worship, and a torrent of abuse so many face just trying to live their lives."

Ali, who is also a Leeds City Councillor, emphasised his determination to continue speaking out. "As someone in public office, I know our party will continue to do our part to challenge hate. This incident won't stop me, I'm more determined than ever!"

The earlier Norfolk incident, on August 29, saw Ali and his children racially abused on Cromer beach, with bottles and plastic cups thrown at them while they were shouted at to "Get out of our country." As they tried to leave, the group followed, escalating the abuse with further racial slurs. Ali described it as "a very public display of hate."

Through both incidents, Ali stressed the need for solidarity and inclusion. Commenting on the proliferation of St George's and Union Jack flags in towns and cities, he warned that national symbols are being "weaponised" to signal exclusion.

"What it's saying is, there are some people who will put the flag up, and they're the ones who belong, and everyone else who doesn't somehow doesn't belong. That narrative has to change," he said.

(Photo credit: Mothin Ali/Instagram)

Muslim schoolboy's assault in Ireland investigated as potential hate crime

Harun Nasrullah

A vicious attack on a 13-year-old Muslim schoolboy in Ireland, captured in a disturbing viral video, is now being investigated by police as a potential hate crime.

The attack took place on October 16, but the incident only became widely known after the video surfaced online weeks later.

The event has sent shockwaves through the local community and ignited urgent conversations about safety and intolerance.

The footage shows Irfan Uddin Gazi from Tuam, County Galway, being cornered in an alleyway and brutally beaten by two older classmates.

Pleading for the assault to stop, the boy is seen being slapped and punched multiple times before a final blow to the jaw sends him collapsing to the ground, clutching his face in pain.

Although the attack occurred on October 16, it only gained widespread attention after the video was shared on social media on November 9, sparking public outrage.



Irfan and his family are part of Galway's close-knit Bangladeshi community, where many expressed their heartbreak and anger online. Friends identified Irfan as a well-regarded boy who actively participates in Qur'an competitions.

"The son of respected brother Gias Uddin Gazi... our community's beloved child... was subjected to a cruel and heartbreaking physical attack by racist classmates at his school," one community member posted on Facebook.

The assault left Irfan with significant bruising and a jaw injury, requiring hospital treatment. The emotional scars, however, run even deeper.

Irfan's father, Gias Uddin Gazi, described the attack as "violent" and said it has shattered his family's sense of security.

"We want to feel safe and Ireland has been great for us," he stated, "but I just want my son and all children to be able to safely go to and from school."

He confirmed that Irfan has since returned to school, which is providing counselling and is "acting on this."

In response to the growing concern, a meeting was held in Tuam earlier this month, attended by local councillors, police, and approximately 80 members of the Bangladeshi community, including the Gazi family. The community voiced fears that they are being targeted for their race and religion.

A Garda spokesperson confirmed that the two teenage assailants have been "referred to the Youth Diversion Programme" and that "investigations are ongoing." This programme, under Ireland's Children Act, aims to guide young offenders away from future crime through supervision and an action plan.

Photo: Viral footage captures Irfan Uddin Gazi from Tuam, County Galway, being cornered and assaulted by two older classmates.

(Credit: X/CC)

Two men charged in Ireland over alleged far-right terror plot targeting mosques and migrant centres

Nadine Osman

Irish authorities have charged two men in connection with an alleged plot by a violent far-right extremist group to carry out attacks on a mosque in Galway and on accommodation centres for migrants across the country.

The charges follow a cross-border counter-terrorism operation between Ireland's Gardaí and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Explosive materials were seized during coordinated searches conducted in County Laois and County Down on November 4.

Garrett Pollock, 35, of Annalong, County Down, and Karolis Peckauskas, 38, of Drogheda, County Louth, appeared before Portlaoise District Court on November 7. Both men were charged with possession of explosive substances, while Pollock faces an additional charge related to alleged possession of bomb-making components and incendiary materials at his home in Northern Ireland.

Detective Garda Declan O'Connor of the Special Detective Unit told the court that evidence included a video recording of four masked men declaring plans to attack what they called "Ireland's first mosque" in Galway, as well as hotels and reception centres housing migrants. The video, believed to have been filmed at a house in Portlaoise earlier in the week, was discovered on a device seized from Pollock's residence. Gardaí said they believe the recording was a rehearsal and had not been publicly distributed.

A document described as a "manifesto" outlining the group's extremist ideology was also recovered during the searches. In the video, the masked men claimed responsibility for what they described as an attack on the Galway mosque and threatened further violence, calling their campaign "an eye for an eye." They accused the Irish government of allowing what they portrayed as a "hostile takeover" by migrants.

Judge Andrew Cody, who viewed the video in a closed court session, said it appeared to be a "practice statement" intended for release after a terrorist attack. He refused bail for Pollock, citing the seriousness of the charges, the risk of flight, and the potential threat to public safety.

Peckauskas, who required an interpreter in court, made no application for bail and was also remanded in custody. When charged, he reportedly told officers, "I do not understand."

Investigations continue into what police believe is a nascent far-right extremist network operating across the island of Ireland.

Welsh priest admits sending neo-Nazi messages advocating violence against Muslims and Black people



Elham Asaad Buaras

A Catholic priest in Wales has admitted to posting violent, hateful messages about Muslims and Black people in a neo Nazi online chat room and has been handed a 12 month community order.

Father Mark Rowles, aged 57 and formerly attached to St John Lloyd Catholic Church in Cardiff, appeared at Cardiff Magistrates' Court on October 30, after admitting to three counts of sending menacing or offensive messages via the Telegram app in May and June 2024.

Under the alias "Skinheadlad1488", Rowles participated in a far right group calling itself the "Aryan Reich Killers", in which he posted explicit calls to violence. He wrote, among other things, of "bombing mosques", declared that "they [Muslims] should all be strung up or shot", and in reference to London's ethnic minorities said, "a few bullets to their brains would help".

The court heard from Prosecutor Rob Simkins that the messages were "hostile based on religion and race".

Following a counter terrorism investigation into far right activity on social media, officers traced Rowles's Telegram posts and arrested him.

The penalty imposed includes 150 hours of unpaid work, payment of £199 in court costs, and a three year Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO). Rowles has not returned to ministry since the allegations emerged, according to a spokesperson for Catholic Church in Wales, and an internal review is under way.

Rowles told investigators that he did not regard himself as racist, claiming that his participation in the extremist chat rooms stemmed from loneliness and a "sexual fetish for role play".

His defence counsel, Jacqui Seal, told the court that he had never previously faced disciplinary action within the Church and had no criminal convictions.

(Credit: West Vale Catholics Parish Magazine CC)

NOVEMBER MONTH OF SPORT UPSETS & TRIUMPHS:

Pakistan seal T20 triumph, Makhachev historic UFC win and Jabeur reaffirms tennis return

CRICKET

Nov. 1 | T20 series | Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore, Pakistan: In a thrilling series decider, Pakistan defeated South Africa by four wickets to claim the T20 series 2-1. The victory was engineered by a commanding bowling performance, led by **Shaheen Shah Afridi's** 3-26, and anchored by a masterful 68 from **Babar Azam**. After being put into bat, South Africa was immediately put on the back foot by Shaheen Shah Afridi, who took two wickets in a spectacular first over. The tourists never fully recovered and were restricted to a total of 139 for 9, with Corbin Bosch's late 30 not out providing some respectability. In reply, **Babar Azam** returned to the side with a flawless display, scoring his 68 from 47 deliveries and sharing a decisive 70-run partnership with captain **Salman Agha**, who contributed 33. Despite a minor stumble that saw four wickets fall quickly as the finish line approached, Pakistan successfully chased down the target with just six balls to spare, sparking celebrations in Lahore.

MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

Nov. 22 | UFC Qatar | ABHA Arena, Doha, Qatar: Ireland's Ian Machado Garry continued his march towards a welterweight title shot by defeating former champion **Belal Muhammad** via unanimous decision. Machado Garry, 28, outstruck the Palestinian American 72 to 56 and successfully defended against all seven of Muhammad's takedown attempts, leaving the 37-year-old frustrated throughout the fight. Muhammad initially tried to impose his striking but struggled to reach Machado Garry's longer range, and when he attempted to shift to his grappling, he was repeatedly thwarted. Despite his experience and former championship pedigree, Muhammad was unable to control the fight, leaving Machado Garry in full command from the opening bell. After the victory, Machado Garry declared himself the number one contender and called out welterweight champion **Islam Makhachev**. "Belal couldn't take me down, so Islam, you try take me down. I am the best in the world," he said.

Nov. 16 | UFC 322 Welterweight Main event | Madison Square Garden, New York, USA: Russia's **Islam Makhachev** made history in New York, becoming a two-weight UFC champion after dismantling Australia's Jack Della Maddalena in a commanding main-event performance. The Russian star, now only the 11th fighter to hold titles in two divisions, extended his decade-long unbeaten run and relieved Della Maddalena of the welterweight crown.

Nov. 9 | UFC Vegas 111 | UFC Apex, Enterprise, Nevada, USA: Serbia's Uroš Medić delivered one of the standout performances of the year with a devastating 63-second knockout of Russia's **Muslim Salikhov**. The Serbian lightweight, already regarded as one of the UFC's most lethal finishers, produced a carbon-copy result of his previous fight, where he also stopped Gilbert Urbina in exactly 63 seconds. Medić wasted no time asserting control, flooring Salikhov with a blistering combination before sealing the victory with a clinical ground-and-pound. The win further cements his reputation as one of the promotion's most destructive knockout artists.

TAEKWONDO

Oct. 24-30 | 2025 World Taekwondo Championships | Wuxi, China: The World Taekwondo Championships concluded with a historic upset, as Turkey dethroned the sport's traditional superpowers to claim its first-ever top-of-the-table finish. This victory marks a significant shift from the longtime dominance of South Korea and China.

The Turkish team's triumph was powered by a trio of new world champions: **Emine Göğebakan** (women's -46 kg), **Merve Dinçel** (-53 kg), and heavyweight **Nafia Kuş** (+73 kg). The upheaval extended beyond Turkey. Tunisia delivered a stunning performance to finish fourth overall, a rare achievement, fueled by gold-medal victories from **Mohamed Khalil Jendoubi** (-63 kg) and **Wafa Masghouni** (-62 kg). In a tie for fifth, Iran and Uzbekistan showcased their rising talent, with **Abolfazl Zandi** (Iran, -58 kg) and **Najmiddin Kosimkhojiev** (Uzbekistan, -74 kg) capturing gold.

Further underscoring the event's changing landscape, Egypt's **Seif Eissa** was crowned champion in the men's -87 kg category, leading his nation to an eighth-place finish. The podium was filled with athletes from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan, signalling a more diverse and competitive future for the sport.

TENNIS

Nov 4. | WTA Tour: Tunisian tennis star **Ons Jabeu**r has confirmed her indefinite hiatus from the sport is not a retirement. The former world No. 2 announced the break in an emotional July statement, explaining she needed to "take a step back" from the game. The popular 31-year-old has endured significant heartbreak on court, losing three Grand Slam finals—including two at Wimbledon. Despite having barely picked up a racket since July, Jabeur is adamant this is a pause and that she will eventually return to professional tennis.

WRESTLING

Oct. 20-27 | 2025 U23 World Wrestling Championships | Novi Sad, Serbia: The future of global wrestling has a clear focal point, as athletes from Muslim-majority nations delivered a commanding performance at the U23 World Championships, capturing a dominant share of the medals. Iran set the standard, clinching the Greco-Roman team title behind gold-medal performances from stars like **Iman Mohammadi** (72kg) and heavyweight **Fardin Hedayati** (130kg). Their prowess extended to freestyle, where **Mohammad Mobin Azimi** (92kg) also topped the podium. The success story was a global one. Azerbaijan's **Elmir Aliyev** and **Ziya Babashov** won Greco-Roman golds, while **Kanan Heybatov** triumphed in freestyle. Turkey's **Nesrin Baş** stood out with a gold in women's freestyle, and Central Asian powerhouses Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan saw champions in **Shugyla Omirbek** and Nurzat Nurtaeva, respectively. From Egypt's **Hassan Abdelrehim** winning Greco-Roman gold to Bahrain's **Magomed Sharipov** earning a freestyle bronze, the results confirm the deep and diverse talent pool emerging from the Muslim world, signalling a shifting landscape in international wrestling.

'What it truly means to die well' – Assisted dying bill debate



Zainab Gulamhusein

The question of how we die, and who should have the right to decide, has taken centre stage in Parliament with the Terminally Ill Adults (End-of-Life) Bill (the "Bill"). The Bill, which would allow mentally capable adults with six months prognosis to choose a medically assisted death under strict safeguards, has sparked a deeply personal and moral debate. Moving beyond legal details, lawmakers, families, and commentators are grappling with fundamental questions about dignity, autonomy, and what it means to care for the most vulnerable at the end of life.

The Bill, which passed the Commons by a narrow margin of 314–291 in a free vote, appears straightforward on paper. Mentally capable adults expected to die within six months would be allowed to choose a medically assisted death, subject to multiple assessments and strict safeguards.

The views of Muslim MPs and ethical concerns

A small number of Muslim MPs, including Labour's Tulip Siddiq and Sadik Al-Hassan, supported the Bill, but the majority (around 84%) voted against it. Their opposition reflected concerns not just about safeguarding, but also broader ethical questions. Their contributions go beyond simple "religious objection," drawing on a rich Islamic ethical tradition that considers life, death, medical duty, and human limitation in a nuanced, context-sensitive way.

Looking at individual MPs as examples, Labour's Shabana Mahmood has emphasised her core concern, that life is inherently valuable and should not be ended through intentional human intervention. Independent MP Iqbal Mohamed stresses a moral responsibility to protect life and raises concerns about the societal implications of normalising assisted dying.

Labour's Naz Shah highlights structural inequalities in healthcare access, warning that minority and low-income communities may face greater vulnerability. MP Shabana Mahmood's concerns are echoed in scholarly discussions, such as Abdulaziz Sachedina's *"End-Of-Life: The Islamic View"*. Sachedina emphasises that in Islamic ethics, life is sacred and ultimately belongs to God, placing strict limits on human authority to end it. While withdrawing life-sustaining treatment is permitted in certain medically inevitable circumstances, actively causing death is prohibited. While Shabana Mahmood's objections are grounded in principle, Islamic law is context-sensitive, recognising the need for careful moral reasoning alongside medical judgement. Ethical deliberation, Sachedina argues, must balance respect for life with recognition of human limitations.

Support for the Bill

MPs who backed the Bill often highlighted personal autonomy, dignity, and compassion, pointing to cases of prolonged suffering as key motivators. Supporters also focus on the human stories behind the debate, describing families witnessing loved ones endure unbearable pain in their final days. They argue that the Bill provides strong safeguards, a rigorous decision-making process, and protections to minimise the risk of coercion.

Broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby is one high-profile advocate in support of the Bill. Speaking from experience after his younger brother died from motor neurone disease, Dimbleby has described the current law as "increasingly unbearable." He has urged MPs to legislate, emphasising that terminally ill adults of sound mind should be able to choose the timing and circumstances of their death. With strict safeguards, he argues, reform could provide dignity and reassurance for those facing unbearable decline.

Supporters also point to international examples. Assisted dying is legal in countries including Canada, New Zealand, parts of Australia, several U.S. states, and European nations such as Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Advocates argue that these examples show carefully regulated frameworks can work in practice. Yet, as Independent MP Iqbal Mohamed and others caution, even in a regulated system, there are wider societal implications to consider. Normalising assisted dying could subtly reshape how society understands the value of life and the duty to care for those who are struggling.

Some fear it might shift expectations around what it means to support people at the end of life, especially those who are disabled, elderly, or otherwise vulnerable. It could also place new pressures, ethical and emotional, on doctors who would be asked not only to preserve life but, in some cases, to help end it. For critics, these broader cultural and professional consequences are just as important as the legal details, and they worry about how such a shift might change our collective approach to compassion and care.

Limits of legislation

MP Naz Shah and other MPs have highlighted that legalisation alone does not guarantee genuine choice. In a country where palliative care is unevenly available, some terminally ill patients may face unnecessary pain simply because proper support is lacking. Language and cultural barriers can make it harder for some communities to navigate the system or understand their options. Marginalised groups may also distrust healthcare providers, leaving them hesitant to request assistance even when legally permitted. For many, the "choice" to end life may be constrained by circumstances beyond their control. This shows the importance of addressing inequalities in healthcare alongside any legal reforms.

Supporters describe the Bill as a compassionate step, intended to spare people from needless suffering. Yet once the conversation moves beyond the wording of the legislation and into the realities faced by patients and families, the challenges become far more layered. The debate ultimately touches on broader questions about how we care for one another, how we protect the most vulnerable, and where the limits of medicine should lie. Personal autonomy matters, but so does collective responsibility. Genuine compassion may require more than simply changing the law. Before altering one of the most significant boundaries in human life, that being the choice to end it, we may need to address the inequalities that determine who actually gets to make that choice.

Regardless of how the Bill fares in the House of Lords, the debate has sparked a thoughtful conversation about what it truly means to die well, and what kind of society we want to be when faced with life's hardest decisions.

NB: At the time of writing, the Bill is moving through committee stage in the House of Lords.

(Photo credit: Freepik/CC)

Zainab Gulamhusein
is a lawyer.

GAZA-RELEATED NEWS

Generational destruction: Study finds Israel's Gaza campaign cost 3m Palestinian life-years

Elham Asaad Buaras

A landmark study in The Lancet medical journal has quantified what it calls "generational destruction" in Gaza, calculating that Israel's military campaign has cost Palestinians 3 million years of future life. The findings have triggered widespread international condemnation and renewed scrutiny of the conflict's human toll.

The research, published on October 31 and based on data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health, calculates that 3.08 million life-years have been lost. The study indicates with 95% statistical confidence that the true figure lies between 2.96 and 3.21 million.

The authors stress this is a conservative estimate, as the data includes only direct violent deaths and not those from the subsequent collapse of infrastructure and healthcare.

The analysis reveals the profound demographic impact of the conflict, showing that an average of 51.2 years of life were lost for every person killed, underscoring that the vast majority of victims were young. The study concludes that over 1 million life-years, with a confidence range between 1.03 and 1.11 million—were lost just among children under 15, representing what the report calls a "generational" loss.

The authors further emphasized that even if all men and boys of typical combat age (15-44) were counted as combatants, the data shows the "most life-years lost are among civilians." The publication has amplified international criticism directed at Israel. "The staggering loss of life-years, particularly among children, represents a catastrophic failure of humanity," said Catherine M. Russell, Executive Director of UNICEF. "We are witnessing the systematic erasure of a generation's future."

The World Health Organization highlighted the compounding crisis. "This study quantifies the initial horror, but we are now confronting a second wave of mortality from a decimated health system," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

Human Rights Watch said the data provides concrete evidence of the war's impact. "These numbers translate the abstract death toll into a measurable account of stolen futures, underscoring the disproportionate effect on civilians," said Executive Director Tirana Hassan.

The Palestinian Authority described the report as "a definitive scientific confirmation of the generational destruction inflicted upon our people in Gaza."

In response to the mounting criticism, the Israeli government rejected the study's validity. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated the report was "built upon unverified data from Hamas-run authorities" and was "scientifically worthless," maintaining that the figures fail to distinguish between combatants and civilians.

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