



MEDIA STATEMENT: Muslim Judicial Council

Delivered by the President, Moulana Ihsaan Hendricks and Second Deputy President, Sheikh Ihsaan Taliep

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Nominations Committee for the Independent Advisory Panel of the Muslim Judicial Council

Background and Introduction

On 10th February 2015, the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the organisation since its founding and establishment in 1945.

In marking this historic occasion and the role that the MJC has and aims to continue playing in contributing to the wellbeing and upliftment of the South African, African and global Muslim community and society at large; the MJC is committed to a process of continued organisational renewal to remain a relevant, constructive, impactful and leading organisation.

As part of the build-up to 70th anniversary of the organisation, the MJC is pleased to announce that it has decided on a process to credibly and independently identify and select suitable and capable South Africans who are subject matter experts in their professions and fields of practice, to serve the organisation as members of an Independent Advisory Panel.

The MJC has carefully considered the concept of an Independent Advisory Panel and has extensively deliberated on its value. Many well-meaning community members and stakeholders have from time to time also raised and proposed the idea of such a panel to the MJC. We have always appreciated these constructive suggestions and taken them into consideration.

Like many organisations, the MJC has realised that it needs to continuously assess the environment within which it is operating and needs to reinvent itself by adopting innovative approaches in order to advance its mandate and responsibilities to society.

Composition of the Nominations Committee

The process we are announcing today will be led by an independent Nominations Committee of reputable and diverse community members who have made their mark and contribution to public, civic and community affairs in South Africa and abroad in their professions.

Following a process of consultation and engagement, the MJC is today pleased to announce that the following persons have agreed to serve as the members of the Nominations Committee:

1. *Mr. Abdul Waheed Patel (Convenor of the Nominations Committee)*

Abdul Waheed is Managing Director at ETHICORE, a respected government affairs, research and communications consultancy. He has more than 12 years professional experience in various positions held in national and local government, the private sector and research bodies. He has deep specialisation in policy, legislative and regulatory affairs, strategic communication and stakeholder management. He is a trusted advisor to leading South African and international organisations on South African and African affairs. He is a highly regarded analyst and commentator in his field, whose insights and opinions are regularly, sought by international as well as local national and community media.

2. *Prof. Waheeda Amien*

Prof Amien is an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Law at the University of Cape Town and is an admitted attorney of the High Court of South Africa. She specialises in Legal Pluralism and Human Rights with a special focus on Religion, Culture and Women's Rights. Prof Amien is a founding member of Shura Yabafazi ('Consultation of Women') as well as the Chairperson of the Recognition of Muslim Marriages Forum in South Africa. She has impeccable international legal academic credentials, with experience of teaching, supervising, researching and lecturing at five international universities.

3. *Mr. Sulaiman Noor Muhammad (Mr. Solly Noor)*

Mr Noor is a respected Businessman and Community leader with more than 50 years experience in the business sector having started as an entrepreneur in his teenage years. He is the head of Sollys Discount World Group, Solly Noor Properties and Computron Group. Community issues have always played a critical role in the Sollys Group of Companies. Accordingly, the Solly and Zohra Noor Foundation assists disadvantaged children nationwide and The Solly Noor Bursary Fund has been responsible for funding many successful candidates in the medical, legal, engineering, and education and business fields. Mr Noor has also been awarded numerous awards for his Community Work, as well as Social Upliftment and engagement.

We are humbled that each of these individuals have recognised the value and importance of guiding and supporting the MJC through this significant process. They have each formally accepted this responsibility and we thank them for putting themselves forward and availing their time.

Mandate of the Nominations Committee

The tasks and responsibilities of the independent Nominations Committee will be to:

1. Design and implement a transparent process to call for nominations, identify, screen and recommend to the MJC a proposed list of suitable candidates for appointment to serve on the Independent Advisory Panel.
2. Manage engagement with prospective nominees, as well as interest and enquiries from the general public, community and media on the nominations process.

It is anticipated that the process for calling for nominations will commence by 17 November and will run until 17 December 2014. The Nominations Committee will make further detailed pronouncements in due course on its work, including the details of the nominations process, the criteria and eligibility for identifying and selecting Members of the Independent Advisory Panel and further timeframes.

Purpose of Independent Advisory Panel:

- To independently provide impartial professional expertise, advice, strategic counsel, thought leadership and guidance to the MJC in the designated subject matter areas requiring specialist advice excluding religious affairs.
- To function outside of current MJC organizational structures and to remain independent of existing decision-making processes within the MJC.
- To accordingly provide independent advice to the MJC either pro- actively or as required.

The MJC has given thought to the subject matter areas the Independent Advisory Panel should focus on. The following are examples of potential focus areas for a panel of advisers and which the work of the Nominations Committee will refine further:

1. *Legal, constitutional and regulatory affairs*
2. *Economic Development*
3. *Politics*
4. *Media and Communication*
5. *Gender*
6. *Youth*
7. *Education*
8. *Crime and safety*
9. *Community development and healthcare*
10. *International Relations*
11. *Finance*

There are multiple, interlinked benefits that both the MJC and society stand to derive from the appointment of an Independent Advisory Panel.

1. *Benefits to society*

In the organizational history of the MJC, the appointment of an advisory panel is one of the most significant transformative developments and will have a positive impact on its reputation and ability to serve society.

2. *Transformation and progress*

The MJC can only benefit from the deep experience of subject matter specialists residing within South African society, whose expertise will guide the organization to make greater progress in areas beyond its traditional strengths in religious affairs.

3. *Strengthening social partnerships*

As part of the process of opening the affairs of the MJC to greater input from experts and professionals beyond the realm of the MJC's traditional religious mandate, the MJC is pleased today to announce that a leading and reputable auditing firm have agreed to conduct an independent audit of the MJC's financial affairs. This is in addition to the already mandatory audits the MJC's finances are already subjected to and will therefore add an additional layer of integrity and rigour in the scrutiny of the MJC's financial matters.

This will lead to an annual public disclosure of the MJC's financial standing, in recognition of the many important and diverse elements to the MJC's revenue mix, including:

- The MJC Halaal Trust
- Corporate social investments and philanthropic support
- Donations, sponsorships and endowments
- Grants, bursaries, poverty eradication and national campaigns

This is an important and significant step towards improved good governance and transparency in the financial affairs of the MJC. It will also contribute to informing strategic financial planning decisions to improve the financial sustainability and self-sufficiency of the MJC in order for the MJC to fulfil its contribution and service to the Muslim community and South African public at large.

4. *Reputation Enhancement*

Historical criticism of the MJC has been that the MJC has conducted its affairs in an insular and closed manner. By appointing a panel of credible and skilled advisers, the

MJC will be embracing change and transformation by being open to external expert and professional advice and thinking in a formalised and institutional manner.

In conclusion, the MJC recognises the importance and value of the Independent Advisory Panel and related processes as a significant achievement for the MJC and value-addition for the community in its entirety, which also marks the start of commemorating our upcoming 70th Anniversary.

- ENDS -

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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