



30 SEPTEMBER 2024

Al Jama-ah would like to respond to the statement issued by the Patriotic Alliance on the 27th of September 2024 under the heading:

‘PATRIOTIC ALLIANCE TO BRING COUNCIL MOTION AGAINST RENAMING OF SANDTON DRIVE TO LEILA KHALED DRIVE’.

Leila Khaled is a symbol of Palestinian resistance. While some people call her a "terrorist," many of us who grew up under oppressive systems, like the Palestinians, see her as a figure of resistance against oppression and occupation. Her actions, though controversial, come from a desire for self-determination and freedom. It's important to understand the historical context of her actions and to consider figures like Mama Winnie Madikizela Mandela, who was also labeled a terrorist. This shows that one person's terrorist can be another's freedom fighter. Comparing her to African liberation heroes makes this point clear, as many of them were also called terrorists by colonial powers.

Al Jama questions the use of the "Terrorist" label. The PA's statement highlights the unsuccessful hijacking attempt and the risk of loss of life. However, it's crucial to note that no lives were lost because of her actions. Additionally, the statement overlooks the larger context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which includes the displacement and suffering of Palestinians. We highlight the hypocrisy in Western narratives. Political parties like Action SA and PA often support views that demonize Palestinian resistance while ignoring Israeli actions. We should ask why these parties hold this perspective, especially considering South Africa's history of opposing oppression and supporting liberation movements around the world. It's also important to remember that Nelson Mandela was once called a terrorist by some. Yet, his statue stands in Ramallah, Palestine, which shows the inconsistency in how such labels are applied. We would like to remind the residents of Johannesburg that the city has a twin agreement, or MOU, with the city of Ramallah in Palestine. This agreement symbolizes our political commitment, similar to the support the Palestinians showed in ending apartheid in South Africa before 1994.





While some argue that we should focus on South African heroes, we should not ignore international figures who have fought for justice and freedom. Renaming the street after Leila Khaled shows our solidarity with the Palestinian people and acknowledges their struggle. Just as Palestinians honour President Nelson Mandela, President Jacob Zuma is respected by the state of Nigeria.

Some claim that renaming the street would damage our relationship with the US. However, this perspective seems to prioritize appeasing a foreign power over upholding our principles and supporting a just cause. The decision to keep the name Sandton Drive was influenced by the narrative pushed by former US President Donald Trump, who spoke of "white genocide" in South Africa. We are shaping our own history as a nation and should not let others dictate how we manage our affairs. South Africa has a strong tradition of an independent foreign policy, and we should not hesitate to take a stand on the Palestinian issue.

The PA recognizes the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but often simplifies the issue by portraying Palestinian resistance in a negative light. It is essential to promote dialogue and understanding instead of relying on labels and generalizations.

Changing the name of a street is a meaningful action that can have a strong effect. It communicates a message of solidarity and support, and it can help increase awareness about the Palestinian struggle.

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