



Speech by Ramla Ruwa, Youth of Al Jama-ah

Title: "Breaking Barriers: Empowering South African Youth for Economic Justice"

As-salaamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh,
Peace be upon you all.

Honourable Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Members of Parliament, respected elders, community leaders, and fellow youth—

I greet you all with humility and purpose.

It is an honour to stand before you today as a voice from the Youth of Al Jama-ah, and as a young Muslim woman, committed to the fight for dignity, justice, and economic inclusion.

We, as the Black, Coloured, and Indian youth of South Africa, carry a heavy historical weight.

Apartheid didn't just take our land—it broke our economies. Townships were never meant to thrive; they were designed to restrict. What we see today—generational poverty, youth unemployment, lack of access to land and capital—is the direct result of that engineered exclusion. These are not just inherited problems. They are political realities we must dismantle.

And while we fight for inclusion, we are also fighting for survival. In the Western Cape, there are more drug dens than schools. Gangsterism and gender-based violence are destroying our youth. Women and children, our most vulnerable, have nowhere safe to turn—our places of safety are underfunded and overcrowded.

How can we talk about youth economic participation, when our children are being recruited by gangs instead of guided by teachers? When trauma, addiction, and fear become the norm?

More than anything we must seek for solutions rooted in justice.

Islam teaches us: *"Do not consume one another's wealth unjustly..."* (Qur'an, 2:188)
Economic justice is not optional—it is a moral obligation.

We call for:

- **Community-based skills centres** in every township that combine learning, rehabilitation, and mentorship.

Registered as a Political Party in terms of Electoral Commissions Act, 1996 (Act No 51 of 1996) Reference No 447. Reg. Level: National

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- Investment in **youth cooperatives** and **interest-free loans** (*qard al-hasan*) that help young people build ethical businesses.
- **Support for shelters and counselling services**, especially for abused women and children.

Women Must Lead Too

Let us be clear: Muslim women face double discrimination—as youth and as women. But Islam honours women in leadership and business. Sayyidah Khadijah (RA) was a trailblazer. We must follow her legacy by empowering our sisters to lead, innovate, and rebuild with dignity.

The Way Forward

We don't need more talk shops. We need **action**:

- A **national youth economic assembly** that includes township, rural, and faith-based youth.
- Real **policy influence**—not tokenism.
- Programs that fight **drugs, GBV, and gangsterism** by building alternatives rooted in hope, not fear.

In closing, our struggle is not only political—it is deeply spiritual.

We are called by our faith to stand for *adl*—justice—and to uplift the oppressed.

To my fellow youth: Do not wait to be invited to the table. Build your own. Then invite others in.

Shukran. Thank you.

Wassalaamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullah.