

# TORONTO BARAZA GROUP MARKS 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



**Provided by Shenny Dungersi** *February 2021*

The Toronto Baraza Group marked their 10-year anniversary and recognized Brother Sajjad Ebrahim, President of Crescent Village Housing Corporation (Complex), for receiving a Doctorate of Laws from Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada.



## The Toronto Baraza Group marks 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



*The Toronto Baraza Group celebrated their 10th Anniversary on 22nd November, 2019.*

The Toronto Baraza Group gathers regularly, usually once a month, to socialize, discuss issues and topics of general interest. The group consists of about 25 males which include professionals, present and past Jamaat leaders, successful businessmen, retirees and individuals who have participated in community events over the past many years.

The group usually meets on Fridays at the Toronto Crescent Village (Complex) in Richmond Hill, Canada. During summer months gatherings are often held outdoors and the events usually consist of meals and beverages which are typical East African fares like *kuku ya kupaka*, *mandazi*, *kitumbuwa*, *chai*, *kahawa*, *tangawizi*, etc.

East Africans have had a long history of getting together with friends to alleviate the routine of daily life and such gatherings came to be known as baraza. [Swahili: ba-ra-za noun council, veranda].

The baraza culture can be traced to Persia, India, the Middle East and Africa. Particularly in Muslim neighborhoods in

East Africa, homes were built to include a baraza, a long cement veranda on the outside where neighbours would sit and discuss the day's events and generally relax. The baraza also served as a forum for news, socializing and learning.

In the West, present day barazas are primarily held by East African Khoja immigrants in England, Florida, New York, Toronto, and other places.

The Toronto Baraza group was started by Marhum Muhammad Hussein Samji in the summer of 2000 as a gathering of a few friends in his garage at the Crescent Village (Complex). However, it was not until the year 2009 that the Group was formalised through the voluntary efforts of Hussein (Shenny) Dungersi and with the active support of Murad Hassanali, Ebrahim Suleiman, Shenny Khalfan and Yusuf Sivjee.

More recently, Nazmul Damji has joined the group and has helped change the course of the Baraza group by inviting speakers on various topics and managing these events. Some of the speakers this year have included Taha Jaffer on the subject of Artificial Intelligence, Ahmed

Raza Sagarwala on Cyber Security and Dr. Shabbir Alibhai on Medical Challenges for Seniors. Br. Kassim Moledina helps facilitate the smooth running of Baraza activities by representing the Baraza at the Crescent Village Board. The Crescent Village has graciously allowed the Baraza Group to use its facilities for holding meetings.

Over the years the Baraza has invited ISIJ Toronto executives, foreign Khoja Shia dignitaries from NASIMCO, Africa Federation and World Federation and scholars such as Sheikh Arif Abdulhussein (Bata) from Birmingham, Hasnain Walji from the United States of America and Mohamed Khalfan, Mohamed Dhirani, Marhum Asgar Bharwani, Aunali Khalfan and Editor of the Federation Samachar, Munir Daya from Dar es Salaam, amongst others. This tradition helps give members some perspective on the activities of the community in various parts of the world.

The regular attendance of the majority of Baraza members at all meetings is an indication of the positive impact on each individual. Studies have shown that seniors who stay socially active and



remain engaged do experience a variety of benefits, including:

- Better cognitive function;
- Maintaining good emotional health;
- Improving physical health;
- Boosting the immune system;
- Enjoying restful sleep, and as a result,
- Increased longevity.

On 22nd November 2019, the Toronto Baraza Group had a triple celebratory and historic gathering. Not only did it celebrate the tenth anniversary of its formal existence but also for the very first time in the Group's history, the meeting was attended by spouses of the members and other invited dignitaries.

At this event, members recognized Dr. Sajjad Ebrahim, the founding member and current President of Crescent Village Housing, to honour him for his



*The Toronto Baraza Group members invited their spouses and several invitees to their 10th Anniversary event*

philanthropic efforts in Canada and overseas and to celebrate the Honorary Doctor of Laws degree conferred on him by Ryerson University in Toronto. Dr. Ebrahim's achievements were eloquently summarized by Bashir Versi.

The speaker of the evening was Abdul Bashir Versi who enlightened the guests on the subject of Financial Planning for seniors. This interesting and appropriate topic was received well by all the attendees.



**Left to Right:** Ebrahim Suleman, Bashir Versi, Iqbal Somani, Rizwan Hasham, Murtaza Mohamed Taki, Gulam Jiwan, Hussein Yusuf Jiwan, Joni Noormohamed, Shokat Kermalli, Sheni Khalfan, Razak Damani, Yusuf Sivjee, Sheralli Thaver, Shenny Dungersi (Baraza Organizer), Dr. Sajjad Ebrahim (President Crescent Village Housing Corporation), Mehboob Siwjee, Nazmul Damji, Asgher Dharamsi, Shabbir Ali Nathoo, Shabbir Mohamed





Spouses of the members of the Baraza and invited guests

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- ▶ **[Friday Baraza Group Zoom Sessions Videos Recorded](#)**
- ▶ **[Updated Baraza Pages](#)**
- ▶ **[Shenny's Main Page](#)**
- ▶ **[More Zanzibar articles](#)**
- ▶ **[Tributes and more interesting articles](#)**