



Gianmarco Soresi



Pete Davidson



John Oliver



Dave Chappelle



Bassem Youssef



Sammy Obeid

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Comedians use humour as crutch to stand up for Palestine

ZARIN TASNIM

Comedy has long been recognised as a potent medium for social commentary and critique. Amongst the myriad of issues it tackles, the Israel-Palestine conflict has not escaped the attention of comedians worldwide. Employing humour as a mechanism for protest and expression, comedians have taken on the task of addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict from their respective approaches while navigating its sensitive and controversial nature. Their approach involves using wit, satire, and irony to dissect the political, cultural, and humanitarian aspects of the conflict. Comedians, with their capacity to make people laugh while delving into difficult and contentious topics, inspire introspection and critical thinking, leading to a more thorough comprehension of the nuances involved. These personalities are drawn to discussing the Israel-Palestine conflict primarily because they have the power to challenge preconceptions and spark

conversation in a way that traditional journalism and political debate sometimes fail to do. They may utilise humour to captivate audiences who might otherwise be reluctant to participate in such divisive conversations.

However, addressing this issue through comedy is not without its challenges. The Israel-Palestine conflict is deeply entrenched in history, politics, religion, and human rights, making it a sensitive and polarising topic. Comedians who choose to broach this subject often face backlash and criticism from various quarters, as humour is subjective and can be interpreted in multiple ways. What one individual considers amusing, another may perceive as offensive or inappropriate.

Despite the risks, several comedians have fearlessly used their craft to address the conflict. Comedians like Bassem Youssef, John Oliver, Michael Kosta, Sam Obeid, Daniel Fernandes, Shahak Shapira, Gianmarco Soresi, Pete Davidson, and Dave Chappelle have incorporated their personal experiences and observations into

their comedy routines. They navigate through the complexities with sharp humour, using their own identities and backgrounds to add depth and authenticity to their performances on the subject matter.

John Oliver, renowned for his observant and provocative humour, has frequently addressed difficult and divisive subjects on *Last Week Tonight*. He used his comedic style to dissect the complexities of the situation regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict both informatively and humorously. One of the key strengths of Oliver's segments is his ability to balance humour with serious analysis; he often presents a nuanced perspective, acknowledging the sensitivity of the topic while using humour to underline the gravity of the situation. This blend of comedy and comprehensive reporting allows him

to engross viewers emotionally while delivering factual information.

The comedian's approach to discussing the Israel-Hamas conflict on *Last Week Tonight* exemplifies the potential of comedy as a means of shedding light on complex geopolitical issues. His segments have succeeded in reaching a broad audience, raising awareness, and encouraging viewers to engage with a deeply entrenched and emotionally charged conflict.

Sammy Obeid's recent comedy *bid Comedian Speaks on Palestine* on YouTube could serve as a prime example of how stand-up comedians use their platforms to discuss and bring attention to sensitive global issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict. As a Palestinian American, Sammy Obeid used



satire, anecdotes and ingenious observations to shed light on various aspects of the conflict, all while entertaining the audience.

Recently, popular Egyptian-American comedian and satirist Bassem Youssef has provided incisive arguments on the Israel-Palestine conflict, highlighting its injustices. He emphasises the importance of satire as a tool to expose the realities faced by Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Concerned with the misapplication of labels such as "antisemitism" to silence critics of Israel, Youssef fervently supports open discussions and refutes the idea that criticising Israeli policy should be considered unacceptable or a threat to one's career. He highlights the adverse effects on Palestinian lives and denounces Israel's disproportionate responses and actions, particularly in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Dave Chappelle, during his comic gig at Boston's TD Garden, criticised Israeli movements in and against Gaza, referring to them as "war crimes". He also condemned the US

for backing Israel and the Hamas attack on October 7.

Pete Davidson hosted Saturday Night Live (SNL) during a time when the Israel-Hamas conflict was escalating. Davidson, who lost his father in the 9/11 terrorist attack, addressed the war by acknowledging his personal experience with tragedy. He empathised with the suffering of both Israeli and Palestinian children and expressed his discomfort in seeing the images of the conflict. Davidson shared a childhood memory of finding solace in comedy after his father's death, stressing that sometimes humour can be a way to navigate tragedy.

While the Israel-Palestine conflict remains a deeply complex and emotionally charged issue, comedians have dared to venture into this contentious territory, using their comedic prowess to shine a light on the multifaceted aspects of the conflict. Through wit and humour, they provoke critical thought, inspire empathy, and encourage audiences to engage with this pressing global concern in a different light.

NEWS

S Korea warns N Korea to scrap spy satellite launch plans

AFP, Seoul

South Korea's military yesterday warned North Korea to immediately stop preparations for a spy satellite launch, vowing to take "necessary measures" if it goes ahead.

North Korea is preparing to launch a spy satellite for the third time, after failing twice this year to put a military eye in the sky.

Earlier this month, Seoul's spy agency said that Pyongyang was in the final stages of preparations for its third try and South Korean defense minister Shin Won-sik said Sunday that the lift-off could take place as early as this week.

"We sternly warn North Korea to... immediately suspend the current preparations to launch a military spy satellite," said Kang Ho-pil, chief director of operations at the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"If North Korea goes ahead with the launch of a military reconnaissance satellite despite our warning, our military will take necessary measures to guarantee the lives and safety of the people," he added.

After a failed second attempt in August, Pyongyang said it would carry out the third launch in October, though it never materialised.

South Korea has said Pyongyang is providing Moscow with arms in exchange for Russian space technology.

Analysts have said there is significant technological overlap between space launch capabilities and the development of ballistic missiles, from which Pyongyang has been banned under multiple UN sanctions.

North Korea has conducted a record number of weapons tests this year, ignoring warnings from the United States, South Korea and their allies.

Last week, it said it carried out successful ground tests of a "new type" of solid-fuel engine for its banned intermediate-range ballistic missiles, calling it a crucial step against "the grave and unstable security environment".

BNP calls blockade

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across the country, including 145 in the capital. Border Guard Bangladesh deployed 231 platoons to maintain law and order.

ARSON ATTACKS

In Dhaka's Mirpur-10, arsonists torched a BRTC double-decker bus yesterday afternoon. Two fire engines rushed to the spot and doused the blaze around 2:45pm, said Shahjahan Sardar, senior station officer of Mirpur Fire Station.

Following the incident, police arrested Sajedul Alam Tutul, joint convener of Swechchhasebak Dal's Rupnagar thana unit, near the spot.

In the Paltan area, unknown arsonists set the bus of Tanjeel Paribahan on fire around 5:10pm. No casualties were reported and all passengers ran to safety.

In the Motijheel area, arsonists set fire to a Sonali Bank staff bus yesterday afternoon. A fire engine rushed to the spot and doused the fire, said firefighters.

In Chattogram, unidentified arsonists torched three buses parked inside an automobile workshop in Satkania upazila early yesterday. No

casualties were reported.

The incident took place in the Keranirhat area on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway around 4:30am, police said.

In Sylhet, BNP supporters allegedly vandalised a truck, a covered van, and two CNG-run auto-rickshaws, and set fire to several roads to halt traffic movement.

Suspected Chhatra Dal men vandalised a covered van and an auto-rickshaw at 8:30am during a procession in Telibazar area of Dakshin Surma, while a group of Jubo Dal activists reportedly vandalised a truck and an auto-rickshaw Shahjalal Upasahar area at 9:00am.

In Sirajganj, criminals set fire to a goods laden truck in the Konabari area of the Bangabandhu Bridge West Zone Highway yesterday morning.

In Jashore, Rab arrested two people who were caught in the act of setting fire to a truck parked next to a road in Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The arrestees are Masum Billah, 27, and Raju Ahmed, 25, from the upazila's Hamidpur Uttarpara area, said Major Sakib Hossain, company commander of Rab-6 in Jashore.

Security for BRTC buses

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He said Railway Nirapotta Bahini will guard all stationary trains. Besides, additional Ansar members would be deployed on all trains. Currently, a handful of cops are deployed only on intercity trains.

Ansar members will be deployed at different critical points, which were identified based on previous experience and intelligence, Humayun said.

The BR has already sent letters to district administrations to deploy Ansar members to patrol rail lines, he said, adding that the railways ministry will also write to the local administrations to intensify the vigilance.

A meeting participant said BR would require a good amount of money to hire 4,000 Ansar members.

The meeting assured BR that it would get the required funds for hiring Ansar members, he said, wishing not to be named.

HC stays

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tenders for a 5G readiness project.

Asaduzzaman then filed a writ petition with the HC challenging the actions against him.

The HC bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu also halted the departmental proceedings against Asaduzzaman.

Asaduzzaman's lawyer Md Shakhawat Hossain told The Daily Star that his client was illegally suspended over cancellation of the tender applications of three disqualified applicants in the 5G project. He also said the HC had earlier issued a rule involving this issue.

The irregularities were detailed in a report run by The Daily Star on November 13 under the headline "Penalised for going by the book".

The report highlighted how Asaduzzaman was thwarted from performing his duties in the tender process for a Tk 463 crore telecom ministry project to get the infrastructure ready for 5G by Abu Hena Morshed Zaman, secretary to the posts and telecommunications division that oversees BTCL.

Documents obtained by The Daily Star show that Asaduzzaman was penalised for following the due process in the tender.

None of the three applicants fully met the technical requirements of the project, so Asaduzzaman did not sign the technical evaluation report, which would have allowed the tender process to move to the next stage. He instead called for a fresh tender.

The report cited Asaduzzaman, who said he followed all public procurement rules at every step when rejecting the technical evaluation committee's report.

A day after the report was published, a show-cause notice was issued to Asaduzzaman by the Posts and Telecommunications Division.

He was given five working days to explain why he would not be charged with "misconduct" under the Employee Discipline and Appeal Rules-2018.

The information disclosed in the said report is "false, motivated and defamatory" to the government and the Department of Posts and Telecommunications, read the notice.

Rohingya man killed

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the OC, but police could not identify whether he was a member of ARSA or RSO.

The body has been sent to Cox's Bazar District Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy, the OC added.

Meanwhile, Rab yesterday claimed to have arrested three top commanders of ARSA in separate raids at two Ukhiya Rohingya camps.

The arrestees included ARSA's sleeper cell and Olama Body's top commander Moulvi Hamid Hossain alias Dr Hamid; finance coordinator Abu Tayyab alias Sona Mia; and commander of intelligence cell Osman Gani.

A team of RAB-15, in collaboration with the state intelligence agencies, arrested Hamid and Tayyab from camp 17 and Osman from camp 4 along with explosive, and locally made firearms and ammunition early yesterday.

Rab-15 Cdr Lt Col HM Sajjad

Hossain disclosed the information at a press briefing in the afternoon.

He said, "Hamid was a village doctor by profession, like his father, and had influence over the Rohingya community. He quickly became one of the close associates of Salman Murabbi, the head of the Olama Body, and later became an active member of the Olama Body."

"He was also involved in the process of recruiting new members of ARSA." "After the arrest of Salman Murabbi a few months ago, Hamid was replaced as the head of the Olama Body. Later, a sleeper cell was formed under his leadership," said the Rab commander.

"He targeted the young and educated Rohingyas in the camp, verified their information, and arranged training for eligible members in ARSA."

"He also provided them with financial support. He has so far added 60 new members to ARSA," said the Rab official.

Polls may be rescheduled

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BNP -- are at odds over the polls-time government.

Soon after the EC announced the polls schedule, BNP and several other opposition parties rejected it, and called for nationwide hartals and blockades, demanding polls under a non-partisan caretaker government.

The opposition parties have been enforcing similar protest programmes since October 29, after the BNP rally in Nayapaltan was foiled in the face of police action.

The AL maintains the next election will be held under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government in line with the constitution.

Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad on Sunday urged President Mohammed Shahabuddin to hold dialogues with political parties to make the election more participatory and festive. She also requested him to extend the deadline for submission of nomination papers.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, two election commissioners said they were not aware of anything about possible dialogues among the political parties and the demand for deferring of the polls schedule.

"We will not say anything on this issue," said Commissioner Rashida.

One of the two commissioners said they would be able to defer the polling date, the last date for submission of nomination papers and other activities by five to seven days, if the BNP decides to join the polls. "But I don't see any change in BNP's political stance."

He said the EC will have to hold the election by January 29 in line with the constitution. But the EC will need some days ahead of January 29 for completing other tasks.

The commissioner said if they hold the election on January 14 or 15, they will get some time to hold re-polls in the centres where voting might be stopped. It will also take time to complete jobs like issuing a gazette notification of the election results.

He also pointed out that the commission should keep in mind that the newly elected MPs are required to take oath. And the president shall appoint the prime minister, who has the support of the majority of the members of parliament. The new government will have to be formed before January 29.