

*Permanent Observer Mission
of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations
(Check against Delivery)*



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة
لدولة فلسطين
لدى الأمم المتحدة

Statement by

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H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly,
H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen Heads of Delegations,

I had hoped that I would not have been compelled to make this statement today, hoping that the cause of my people would have been justly resolved, would have been genuinely heard, and that hearts and consciences would have acted to lift them from oppression.

As you all are aware, we have accepted the primacy and judgment of international law and resolutions of international legitimacy, and made a historic and immense sacrifice, when the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, accepted to establish the State of Palestine on the 4 June 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

What more can be asked of us?

We remain committed to the agreements reached with Israel since 1993. However, Israel must reciprocate this commitment and must act forthwith to resolve all of the final status issues. It must cease all of its settlement colonization activities and aggressions against our cities, villages and refugee camps. It must cease its policies of collective punishment and its demolition of Palestinian homes. It must cease its extrajudicial executions and cease the arrest of our people, and must release the thousands of our prisoners and detainees. It must cease its aggression and provocations against the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. For all of these policies and practices prevent an environment in which peace can be realized in our region.

How can anyone seeking peace perpetrate such actions?

In this regard, we reaffirm that we can never accept the continuation of the prevailing situation. We will never accept the humiliation of the dignity of our people. We will never accept temporary or interim solutions. And, our people will never accept to forgo their national institutions and achievements, which they attained through great sacrifice, suffering and pain. We will preserve the independence of Palestinian decision-making and will act to fulfill the aspirations of our people via political and diplomatic means and international law and the legitimacy of international resolutions via the United Nations and all international forums, and we will seek to mobilize Arab and international efforts towards this end.

We will not accept the continuation of the prevailing situation.

The 1993 Oslo Accords were intended to the end of the occupation and achieve the independence of the State of Palestine within five years. Yet, Israel reneged on the agreements it signed and, to this moment, persists with its occupation and continues to expand its illegal settlement enterprise, which undermines realization of the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.

Does Israel want one State?

Despite the Security Council's adoption of 12 resolutions condemning Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since 1967, none of these resolutions has been implemented, encouraging Israel to continue pursuing its plans for the seizure of more Palestinian land in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with impunity. The violent actions of Israeli settlers have reached the extent of the formation of terrorist groups that burn and kill entire families, destroy properties, and uproot the trees that are the livelihoods of Palestinian families.

Israel's disrespect and contemptuous policies have even lead to attempts to "legalize" the settlements and the settlers colonizing our occupied land since 1967. It even led to the point of the Israeli Prime Minister claiming that the call for cessation of settlements and their dismantlement and evacuating settlers constitutes "ethnic cleansing". All such attempts are null and void and constitute clear grave breaches under international law.

So, who then is perpetrating ethnic cleansing?

In this regard, I am compelled to again warn that what the Israeli Government is doing in pursuit of its expansionist settlement plans will destroy whatever possibility and hopes are left for the two-State solution on the 1967 borders.

The settlements are illegal in every aspect and any manifestation.

We will therefore continue to exert all efforts for a Security Council resolution on the settlements and the terror of the settlers, and we are undertaking extensive consultations with the Arab countries and other friendly countries on this matter.

We hope no one will cast a veto.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Israel's racial discrimination against the Palestinian people has become a daily reality as it continues to privilege the Israeli settlers on our occupied land, including by granting them permits for residential construction as well as for factories, economic projects and infrastructure such as for road, electricity and water networks. This is happening at the very same time that they are preventing the Palestinian owners of the land from the use of their land and prohibiting them from developing their economy, which is a right of international priority in this era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in which no country should be left behind. Military orders continue to be issued to prohibit their use of the majority of their lands in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley, and the Palestinian shores on the Dead Sea. And it continues with its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip. And it continues to illegally alter identity and status of Occupied East Jerusalem and to commit aggressions and provocations against our Christian and Muslim holy sites, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The continuation of the Israeli aggressions against our Muslim and Christian holy sites is playing with fire.

All of these Israeli policies, actions and measures are the reasons for the failure of all international efforts, particularly that of the international Quartet for the past 13 years, just as Israel has sabotaged the efforts of successive American administrations over the decades.

Here, I must once again appeal to you to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, suffering under occupation since 1967 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. I extend my appreciation in this regard to the Security Council members who convened an Arria meeting of the Council to explore the possibilities of international protection for our people, and I urge that these efforts continue.

If you do not ensure for us protection, then who will?

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Israel today also continues its attempts to evade an international conference for peace, which has been proposed by France and which has received the support of the majority of the world's countries. In June of this year a ministerial meeting was held in Paris to prepare for the convening of such a conference and 28 countries, along with three inter-governmental organizations, participated in that meeting. It remains our hope that such a conference will lead to the establishment of a mechanism and defined timeframe for an end to the occupation in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, which calls, *inter alia*, for a just and agreed solution for the Palestine refugees in accordance with resolution 194.

We hope that all States of the world will support the convening of this international peace conference before the end of this year.

If there will be no international peace conference and no direct negotiations, then how can peace be made?

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Instead of Israel acknowledging the atrocities that it has committed and continues to commit against our people, the Israeli Prime Minister has the audacity to criticize Palestine's statement at the Arab League Summit in Nouakchott because we referred to the Balfour Declaration. I say to him today that our 1993 recognition of the existence of the State of Israel, a recognition which remains valid to this moment, is not a gratuitous recognition. Israel must reciprocate with recognition of the State of Palestine and an end to its occupation of the land, so that the State of Palestine can coexist alongside the State of Israel in peace and security and as good neighbors, each within secure and recognized borders.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no conflict between us and the Jewish religion and its people. Our conflict is with the Israeli occupation of our land. We respect the Jewish religion and condemn the catastrophe that befell the Jewish people in World War II in Europe, and view it as one of the most heinous crimes perpetrated against humanity.

Realization of a historic reconciliation between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples requires that Israel acknowledge its responsibility for the *Nakba* inflicted on our people to this very day. This will open a new era of coexistence and will serve to build bridges rather than walls. I believe that the Arab Peace Initiatives presents a reasonable, serious solution. Yet Israel continues to insist on being selective, choosing only what it wishes from this Initiative, such as establishment of relations with the Arab countries first without ending its occupation of Palestine. This is definitely a recipe for the continuation of the conflict in our region, and we will not accept this and no one else can accept it.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

By the end of this coming year, 100 years will have passed since the Balfour Declaration, and 70 years since *Al-Nakba* of the Palestinian people, and 50 years since Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Yes, 100 years have passed since the notorious Balfour Declaration, by which Britain gave, without any right, authority or consent from anyone, the land of Palestine to another people. This paved the road for the *Nakba* of Palestinian people and their dispossession and displacement from their land. As if this were not enough, the British Mandate interpreted this Declaration into policies and measures that contributed to the perpetration of the most heinous crimes against a peaceful people in their own land, a people that never attacked anyone or partook in a war against anyone.

Therefore, we ask Britain, as we approach 100 years since this notorious Declaration, to draw the necessary lessons and to bear its historic, legal, political, material and moral responsibilities for the consequences of this Declaration, including an apology to the Palestinian people for the catastrophes, miseries and injustices that it created, and to act to rectify this historic catastrophe and remedy its consequences, including by recognition of the State of Palestine.

In addition, Israel, since 1948, has persisted with its contempt for international legitimacy by violating United Nations General Assembly resolution 181 (II), the partition resolution, which called for the establishment of two States on the historic land of Palestine according to a specific partition plan. Israeli forces seized more land than that allotted to Israel, constituting a grave breach of

Articles 39, 41 and 42 of the United Nations Charter. In the preamble of resolution 181 (II), paragraph (c) clearly states: “*The Security Council determine as a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression, in accordance with Article 39 of the Charter, any attempt to alter by force the settlement envisaged by this resolution*”.

Regrettably, however, the Security Council is not upholding its responsibilities to hold Israel accountable for its seizure of the territory allotted to the Palestinian State according to the partition resolution. I appeal to you read this resolution once again.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We continue our efforts to build the foundations of a culture of peace among our people. We stand against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and we condemn it by whomever and wherever. Our region has been the largest victim of terrorism and has endured its wrath over many years. We support the unity of people and land and the achievement of political solutions for all of the conflicts in Syria, Libya, Iraq and elsewhere, and we support the efforts of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to strengthen the foundations of legitimacy in brotherly Yemen. We support the efforts to confront terrorism, extremism, sectarianism and violence, and appeal to stand united against terrorism, which knows no religion.

In this context, I wish to reaffirm once again that there is no way to defeat terrorism and extremism and achieve security and stability in our region without ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine and ensuring the freedom and independence of the Palestinian people.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We continue our genuine efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation with the formation of a national unity government in accordance with the political platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization and with the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections. We also continue our efforts to reconstruct Gaza, to alleviate the hardships of our people, and to lift the illegal blockade imposed on them.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our hand remains outstretched for making peace. But the question that keeps presenting itself over and over again: is there any leadership in Israel, the occupying Power, that desires to make a true peace and that will abandon the mentality of hegemony, expansionism and colonization, and that will recognize the rights of our people and will end the historic injustice inflicted upon them? It is Israel’s breach of the agreements it has signed and its failure to comply with its obligations that has led us to the deadlock and stalemate that we remain in.

The State of Palestine, an Observer State in the United Nations, is a State under occupation. The Executive Committee of the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people wherever they may be, acts on behalf of our people and as their government and the Palestine National Council is the parliament of the State of Palestine, as reflected in UN General Assembly resolution 67/19 of 29 November 2012.

We continue to rely on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities, and we call on those countries in particular that have harmed the rights of our people to rectify this injustice. Moreover, we appeal to countries that have not recognized the State of Palestine to do so.

Those who believe in the two-State solution should recognize both States, and not just one of them.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly, I call on you to declare 2017 as the international year to end the Israeli occupation of our land and our people, as we approach in June 2017 a half century of this abhorrent Israeli occupation. I also appeal to you, in follow-up the adoption of resolution 67/19 with the adoption of a resolution to enable Palestine to present and cosponsor resolutions beyond the question of Palestine and to support our efforts to enhance Palestine's legal and political status, including by granting it additional responsibilities to chair committees and international groups, while at the same time we will continue our efforts for full membership in international organizations.

Based on all of the above, the international community is called upon to exert all efforts, more than any other time in the past, to bring an end to the Israeli occupation of the land of the State of Palestine, which, as you all know, is the longest and last occupation in contemporary history. The international community's ability to advance the rights of our people and ensure their exercise of those rights and to end the oppression and injustice imposed on them for seven decades would surely constitute a unique opportunity for peace, stability and coexistence to prevail in our region and between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. This will create a better future for the current generation and generations to follow, and will be the beginning and the basis of ending extremism and violence in our region and the world.

I thank you for your attention and hope from the depths of my heart that the Israeli occupation of our land will end and that we can defeat terrorism and that the conflicts will end and peace will reign in our region and all around the world. We and our people will continue to open the doors for peace and will do all that we can to realize the freedom and independence of our people. We will remain steadfast on our land to serve and ensure the future of our next generations.

It is my hope that I will not have to make such a statement again as there is a collective responsibility upon you to ensure that 2017 is the year of ending the occupation. Will you uphold this responsibility? It is my hope.

Peace be upon you.