

**Speech of His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas**  
**President of the State of Palestine**  
**At the United Nations on the anniversary of the Nakba**  
**New York 15-5-2023**

In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful

His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Mr. Csaba Korosi, President of the United Nations General Assembly,

Mr. Cheikh Niang, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Ladies and gentlemen, heads of delegations and representatives of states and international institutions,

At the outset, I extend my thanks and appreciation for your unprecedented historic decision to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba, which Israel committed against the Palestinian people, today the fifteenth of May 2023, after it was ignored for the past years.

This decision represents an acknowledgment by your esteemed organization of the continuous historical injustice that befell the Palestinian people in 1948, before 1948 and until today, and it also constitutes the first refutation by you of the Zionist-Israeli narrative that denies this Nakba. I have full confidence and hope that this international organization will spare no effort to restore consideration for the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights

and remove the effects of this catastrophe, first by adopting it as an annual event through an international resolution, and considering the fifteenth of May of each year as an international day to commemorate the tragedy of the Palestinian people which is a tragedy for all of humanity. Secondly, by working to achieve the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the independence of their state, and the return of refugees to their homes from which they were expelled, so that this tragedy does not become a disgrace to humanity.

On this day when I stand before you, our Palestinian people in their various places of residence in Palestine and in the diaspora, as well as the friends of our people and the free people of the world in many capitals and cities, commemorate this tragic memory that still casts a dark shadow over us. Despite this, the Palestinian narrative, related to the Nakba and the Palestinian cause in general, has begun to make its way into the awareness of peoples and countries that are discovering the falsity of the Israeli narrative, with the efforts of our people, and with the support and assistance of supporters in this world.

I would also like to inform you that a national memorial commemorating the Nakba is being built in Palestine to become a witness to this human tragedy, along with an institution for the Palestinian national memory, and we have issued a Palestinian law to commemorate the Nakba every year.

The Nakba, ladies and gentlemen, did not begin in 1948, nor did it end after this year. Israel, the occupying Power, continues its occupation and aggression against the Palestinian people, and continues to deny this Nakba, and rejects the decisions of international legitimacy that call for the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes, cities, and villages from which they were expelled by force and intimidation, and it still occupies the land of

the State of Palestine, which your esteemed assembly approved and accepted as an observer member in, and it continues to confiscate Palestinian lands and build Jewish settlements on them, in addition to imposing an apartheid regime on the Palestinians, whether inside Israel or in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967.

Over the years, this international organization has adopted hundreds of resolutions recognizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in their homeland (almost a thousand resolutions), including Resolution 181 of 1947, which stipulates the establishment of an Arab state for the Palestinian people on an area of 44% of the land of historic Palestine alongside the State of Israel. As well as Resolution 194, which states the return of the Palestinian refugees. Forcing Israel to implement these two resolutions was a condition for accepting its membership in the United Nations. Unfortunately, certain countries in this organization intentionally obstructed the implementation of your decisions, in a practice that prejudices justice, morals, and human values, and increases the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Therefore, we formally call on you today, and in accordance with international law and resolutions of international legitimacy, to oblige Israel to respect these decisions of yours, or to suspend its membership in the United Nations, especially since it has not fulfilled the obligations to accept its membership in your esteemed organization. (The letter of Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett to the General Assembly on November 29, 1948, in which he pledged to respect and implement Resolutions 181 and 194) Until now, this has not been met.

Today, major powers that you know fully stand idly by in the face of the continued aggression against our people, and refuse to hold Israel accountable for its aggression, occupation of Palestinian land, building settlements on it, destroying the two-state solution,

and violating the historical legal status of the Al-Haram Al-Sharif. These countries have accepted that the occupying state remains a state above the law, and to provide it with protection from any accountability or punishment, so how long can this situation continue? Who obstructs the implementation of the decisions of your esteemed organization? Why this double standards?

**ladies and gentlemen,**

Britain and the United States, in particular, bear direct political and moral responsibility for the Nakba of the Palestinian people. They are the ones who participated in making our people a victim when they decided to establish and plant another entity in our historical homeland, for their own colonial goals. Israel would not have persisted in its aggression without the support provided it receives from these countries, for the one who issued the Balfour Declaration is the British government, in full coordination with the United States of America, and these countries accepted without any scrutiny the claim that Palestine was a land without a people.

The ominous Balfour Declaration described the majority of the population, i.e., the Palestinian Arabs (as the non-Jewish population), without mentioning them by name and promised to give them religious and civil rights only, even though they constituted 96% of the total population in Palestine.

Here I ask: where is the logic and justice in this promise? What is the legal basis on which it is based? What is the rule of international law in this matter? In fact, it is the promise of those who do not have to those who do not deserve.

The colonial powers, which bear a historical responsibility for the Nakba, must bear a historical responsibility in return, in providing justice to the Palestinian people and ending their suffering.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The first, and most common, fabricated Zionist claim was that Palestine was a land without a people and should be given to a people without a land.

The truth is that our historical homeland, Palestine, was never a land without a people, so that it can be given unfairly and aggressively to those who claimed that they are a people without a land. Our collective creative existence has been there ever since we built it. How can Palestine be a land without a people when it was one of the most civilized regions of the Fertile Crescent and the Arab East, full of life, development, culture and urbanization (For example, in the city of Jaffa alone, there were dozens of libraries, publishing houses, newspapers and cinemas).

They also claimed that the Palestinians left their country in 1948 voluntarily. The truth of the matter is that the Palestinians rose to defend their historical homeland and their presence on their land, despite the limited capabilities available to them. However, the colonial powers, and Britain in particular, provided the Zionists with all the means of force in order to implement their colonial project by force of arms, while punishing every Palestinian who carried arms in defense of their selves, their land and rights.

The result was that the State of Israel was established. It committed more than fifty massacres, killed tens of thousands of Palestinians, destroyed more than five hundred and thirty Palestinian villages and displaced 957 thousand refugees which constitutes more than half of the Palestinian people at the time.

Israel continues to repeat these fabricated allegations, despite the published evidence and secret Zionist documents acknowledging and acknowledging that the Palestinians persevered, fought, and resisted forced displacement. The last of these evidences

is the movie Al-Tantura, the Israeli documentary film produced and directed by the Israelis themselves, in which the Israeli soldiers who killed more than 200 Palestinians in cold blood confess to their witnessed crime.

Israel, ladies and gentlemen, and above all the crimes it has committed and is still committing against our people since the Nakba until today, it also violates the sanctity of Islamic and Christian religious sanctities in Palestine, and it also prevents Palestinians from their right to freedom of worship in Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Sharif which is the exclusive right of Muslims alone.

Islamic and Christian cemeteries were not spared from the attacks of the occupation and its terrorist settlers, in addition to the illegal excavations carried out by the occupation authorities under Al-Aqsa Mosque.

I must mention here the report issued by the Council of the League of Nations in 1930, on property rights in the Al-Buraq Wall, which is part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque where this report confirms and with the approval of all witnesses, including Jewish clerics, that the ownership of the Al-Buraq Wall and Al-Haram Al-Sharif belongs exclusively to the Islamic Endowment alone.

**ladies and gentlemen,**

Israel makes other false allegations to cover up its aggression and crimes, as it claims that its wars against the Palestinians and Arabs were defensive wars.

How can committing massacres, destroying villages, and displacing half of the population of Palestine in 1948 be a defensive war and how can Israel's war in 1956 and the occupation of Sinai and the Gaza Strip be a defensive war?

How can the 1967 war be a defensive war, when secret Israeli documents revealed that it was planned long ago, as confessed of the Israeli army generals? And do defensive wars mean preserving the lands that are being occupied and annexed to the invading state (as is the case with regard to Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan), in flagrant violation of the resolutions of international legitimacy, such as Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and other resolutions that do not allow the seizure of the land of others by force, leading to Resolution 2334 issued by the Security Council on December 23, 2016, which stipulated an end to Israeli settlements and the cessation of settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem? Does the defensive war mean the establishment of colonies on the land of the occupied people and the transfer of the colonists to it, whose number today in the Palestinian land that was occupied in 1967 has become more than 750,000 settlers?

Are the repeated wars of aggression waged by Israel against our people in Jenin, Nablus, Gaza and other Palestinian cities, villages and camps, the latest of which is the recent war of aggression against the Gaza Strip and the killing of innocent children and women, called defensive wars?

The continuation of the Israeli occupation of our land and the imposition of the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip is the real reason for the continuation of the cycle of violence, and if the occupation is gone forever, there will be no justification for violence and wars.

The Zionist and Israeli allegations continue their false claims by saying that Israel made the desert bloom.

Palestine was not a desert for the Zionists to come and make it bloom.

Palestine, my friends, is a Mediterranean country full of fertile plains, and it had rivers and lakes, and it used to export its

agricultural products to many countries of the world before the establishment of the State of Israel.

The biggest lie is Israel's claim and those who support it among the colonial countries, that it is the only democratic country in the Middle East.

The only democratic state that committed the Nakba of the Palestinian people in 1948 and has occupied the Palestinian people since 1967 and it is the only country in the world that occupies another people, so how can occupation be equal to democracy?

This only democratic state that has been classified by international human rights organizations, such as the Israeli organization B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, as a state of separation and racial segregation (apartheid) and the International Court of Justice is considering today the nature of its occupation of the Palestinian land. This state is the one that discriminates racially among its citizens and issues laws that consider Jews to have an exclusive right to self-determination. There is much that refutes this great lie of Israel being the only democratic state in the Middle East.

Another false narrative propagated by Israel and uncritically picked up by its supporters is the claim that the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity and that there is no Palestinian partner for peace.

What does it mean, then, for the Palestinian people to accept a Palestinian state on only 22% of the land of their historic homeland, recognize Israel and accept to live alongside it in security, peace and good neighborliness? What does it mean for the Palestinian people to accept all international legitimacy decisions, and to show their willingness to resolve the conflict with Israel through peaceful negotiations on their basis? What does it mean for



the Palestinians to accept the Arab Peace Initiative, which has become part of UN Resolution 1515 and calls for an end to the Israeli occupation of the occupied Palestinian and Arab lands since 1967 in exchange for peace? Finally, who denied and retracted the understandings of Aqaba and Sharm el-Sheikh in recent weeks, before the ink was even dry on which they were written, which took place in the presence of the United States, Egypt and Jordan, to stop unilateral measures, achieve calm, and abide by the signed agreements, in order to move towards the political horizon. So, who is missing out on opportunities? And where is the Israeli peace partner?

In the context of talking about Israeli narratives, Israel says that these days it celebrates the seventy-fifth anniversary of its independence. I just want to ask who did Israel become independent of? And who was occupying it?

Here, I want to stress that the most important condition for achieving peace and security in our region lies in recognizing the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the independence of their sovereign Palestinian state on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and resolving the Palestinian refugee issue on the basis of Resolution 194 and the release of all Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons. Peace and security cannot be achieved without this.

We, ladies and gentlemen, are not against the Jews, and we are not against the Jewish religion, but we are against those who occupy our land, violate our rights and attack our sanctities.

**ladies and gentlemen,**

Today, events are taking place in Israel, and dangerous, extremist voices are rising, denying the existence of the Palestinian people, and calling for the perpetration of another catastrophe

against the Palestinians, under the hearing and sight of the Israeli government, without denouncing it or moving a finger, and there are those who openly call for killing the Palestinians, expelling them from their lands and demolishing their homes and exporting them from it, which unfortunately is what the Israeli government itself, led by Netanyahu, Smotrich, Ben Gvir and other extremists and settlers, is doing. What happened in the village of Hawara in terms of killing and burning of homes and property by gangs of terrorist settlers, with the protection of the Israeli army, the army of the occupying power, raises terror and brings to mind a vivid picture of what happened in the Nakba in 1948. This is a very dangerous matter that cannot and should not be tolerated. The international community must also intervene and deter aggression, and provide international protection for the Palestinian people.

In this context, we salute all the positions taken by many countries, the honorable and free people of the world, and the peace-loving forces that condemned the Israeli crime in Hawara. We especially salute the Israelis with living consciences who went to the village, demonstrated in solidarity with its people, and protested against the killing, burning and destruction that took place there, and as a result they were subjected to repression and assault by extremist settlers and the Israeli army forces.

It is not permissible for the international community to accept or remain silent on the fabrications and false allegations of Israel, and it is not permissible for Israel to escape accountability and punishment. It is not permissible for Israel to remain a state above the law in this international community and the global system and this esteemed international organization that works to achieve international peace and security must maintain its credibility and therefore the first step that the Israeli government must take is for it and its partners to acknowledge responsibility for the Nakba which

it still denies and assume responsibility for the massacres and crimes committed against the Palestinian people, and their displacement, and apologies, requests for forgiveness and reparations and implement all relevant international legitimacy resolutions. If Israel and those who supported it, as well as the entire international community, does not do so, the roots of the conflict will remain. But we will continue to demand our right before you and, in all venues, including international courts foremost of which is the International Criminal Court.

**ladies and gentlemen,**

The only bright truth that we deal with and we call on the whole world to deal with, which represents the root of the Palestinian people's narrative, is that we are the owners of the right, we have been here since the dawn of history and we will remain here until the end of the world.

It is the right of the Palestinian people to live freely and dignified in a free and dignified homeland. The people have the right to defend themselves, their existence and their national rights and allow me to say, that it is their right that you must help them achieve their freedom, independence and full membership in the United Nations, implement your relevant resolutions, and live in security and peace, like the rest of the peoples of the world as it is their right that you implement the decisions of international legitimacy and provide them with international protection.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Our people stand united today to commemorate the Nakba, and I would like to assure everyone that we will preserve our national unity by all means and whatever the challenges, within the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and

legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and adherence to international legitimacy.

Finally, I would like to salute the steadfastness of our Palestinian people in Palestine and in the refugee camps and diaspora, foremost of which is Jerusalem, the jewel of the crown and the flower of cities, for their steadfastness in their homeland and I salute with pride our brave martyrs, prisoners and wounded. And I say to all of them that the memory of the Nakba will remain present in our consciousness and as a beacon and motivation for our people until the end of the occupation and the achievement of freedom and independence, and I repeat once again that the occupation will end, and the Palestinian right will triumph in the end, sooner or later, for peace to prevail in our region and the world.

Thank you.

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