

The Palestinian People's Principal Problem Is Their Own Leadership. Mahmoud Abbas' Address to the UN General Assembly

Abbas at the UN

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*Palestinian **President Mahmoud Abbas'** address to the UN General Assembly was disappointing. It repeated the same phrases used in his last eight speeches. Nothing new at all. The same appeals for international sympathy. Even the wording of his complaints about Israel's failure to respect agreements was unchanged. And his declaration that the US is not an honest broker but biased towards Israel we have heard a million times before.*

So it was neither strange nor surprising that the chamber was almost empty of delegates and delegation heads, and that the warm applause came mostly from the Palestinian delegation.

US **President Donald Trump** will not heed Abbas' demands that he rescind his recognition of Jerusalem as capital of Israel. Nor will East Jerusalem be capital of a Palestinian state, because there will be no Palestinian state at all. Not according to the US' 'Deal of the Century', which has rapidly begun entering the implementation stage - with US support, the collusion of some Arabs, and Palestinian security coordination.

The US and Israel will not fret about Abbas' threats regarding their non-compliance with the agreements signed with them. Nor will that arouse the sympathy of UN member-states. So long as he continues talking Mother Theresa-like about peace, renouncing violence, and joining the fight against terrorism in any part of the world - as he affirmed in his speech - nobody will listen to him or take him seriously.

It was regrettable that the Palestinian president used the UN podium to discuss the agreements he signed with the Hamas movement and threaten not to abide by them. That is the only one of his threats he will actually carry out: to cut off what remains of the Palestinian Authority (PA)'s aid to the Gaza Strip. This amounts to around \$90 million in electricity subsidies and salaries, the vast majority of which go to members of Fateh, the PA's party. Is this the place to make such threats? Does the world benefit from hearing them?

The international community will not thank Abbas for promising not to resort to violence or revert to 'terrorism' i.e. legitimate resistance to occupation. How could such thanks be forthcoming from UN delegates when so many of their countries gained their freedom through resistance, not by imploring and lamenting the loss of their rights at international forums.

Abbas has been saying for the past ten years or so that peaceful popular resistance is the only option. We ask: Where is this resistance? Why do the PA's security forces repress all political activists and throw them in jail, or inform on them to the occupation authorities to facilitate their arrest? Enough lies and deception, please. Respect your people's intelligence, and their martyrs and prisoners.

We ask President Abbas: Why did the US administration cut off all aid to schools, hospitals, PA institutions and UNRWA, while increasing its aid to the Palestinian security forces, at a time when he announced a boycott of any meeting or dialogue with the US? What good did this boycott do in this case?

The fault does not lie with UN, the US, or Israel. It lies with President Abbas, his leadership and administration, his Authority, his security coordination, and his speechwriters and cheerleaders. When Palestinian leaders chose the course of resistance and sacrifice, the US and Israel and the West in its entirety sought to meet and negotiate with them, recognized them, and feared them.

This farce needs to be ended at once, and the actors stripped of their masks. It has gone too far, and the Palestinian people, both in the homeland and the diaspora, must not remain silent about this situation.

President Abbas's full speech at the UNGA.

[Jerusalem is not for sale](#), and the Palestinian people's rights are not up for bargaining in the name of God, the most merciful and beneficent, excellency Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, president of the UN General Assembly and your excellency Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, peace be upon you.

Peace be upon you, we will stay and we will maintain our faith in peace. We will maintain peace and we will achieve our independent state with peace because God is with us and our cause is just and our people have sacrificed a lot and because you lovers of peace and God is always against those who are plaguing us with injustice and God is enough.

In these days, last year, I came before you- appealing for freedom, independence and justice for my oppressed people who are suffering under the yolk of the Israeli occupation for more than 51 years and today I return as this colonial occupation continues to suffocate us, undermining our serious unwavering efforts to build the institutions of our cherished state which this August, the General Assembly recognized in 2011.

This year, ladies and gentlemen, the Palestinian National Council, the parliament of the state of Palestine convened and renewed the legitimacy of our national institutions through the election of a new leadership for the Palestine Liberation Organization, the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

This parliament undertook important decisions whereby I have to review the agreements- political, economic and security alike- that have been reached with the Israeli government and to review the future of the Palestinian National Authority which unfortunately has been rendered without authority.

[The parliament also instructed me to suspend the Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel](#) until Israel recognizes in its turn the State of Palestine on the fourth of June, 1967 borders. I was also instructed to approach international courts, including the International Criminal Court (the ICC) to investigate Israel's breaches of treaties and the aggressions by the Israeli occupying forces and settlers against our people, on our land and our holy sites.

And you might note, ladies and gentlemen, that the Israeli settlers and even the Israeli army on every single day- they are [committing acts of blasphemy against our holy sites, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque](#).

Ladies and gentlemen, last July Israel adopted a racist law that crossed all the red lines and it was called the ["Nation-State Law of the Jewish People."](#) This law denies the connection of the Palestinian people to their historic homeland and the dismisses their right to self-determination and history and heritage as well as the UN resolutions relevant to the Palestine question and the agreements concluded with Israel.

This law will inevitably lead to the creation of one racist state, an apartheid state, and thus nullifies the two-state solution. Israel practices discrimination but actually this law comes as the epicenter of this discrimination. This law discriminates against the Palestinian Arab citizens in Israel, granting the right to self-determination exclusively to Jews in Israel, thus legalizing discrimination against those Arab citizens who constitute 20% of the population of Israel.

In addition to other non-Jews who have immigrated to Israel, thus they are stripped of the rights of citizenship. At least 5% of the current population of Israel are immigrants, they are non-Jews. They are Christians and Muslims who immigrated from the former USSR, they have also been stripped from the rights to citizenship.

This law constitutes a gross breach and real danger, both politically and legally and reminds us of the [apartheid state that existed in South Africa](#). Thus, we reject this law and condemn it in the strongest terms. And we call on the international community and this assembly to condemn it and reject it as a racist, illegal law and null and void.

The United Nations had condemned the apartheid South African state in several resolutions in the past, bearing in mind that thousands of Jews and Israeli citizens have rejected and protested against this law. 56 Knesset members out of 120 voted against it. Because they believe that it's a racist law. That's why I call upon the UN to follow the same line, to follow in the footsteps of a number of Israeli citizens who rejected this law altogether in letter and in spirit.

This racist law, ladies and gentlemen, talks about what is called 'the Land of Israel.' Can you ask the Israeli government what exactly constitutes the land of Israel? What are the borders of the State of Israel? I challenge anyone to tell us what they are. Where are the borders of the State of Israel? Please bring me a map and just show where are the borders of Israel. This racist law constitutes another stigma on Israel and anyone who can censor it and condones such acts.

This law is just like other Israeli laws that legislated theft, piracy and confiscation of the land, property and funds of the Palestinian people.

We have always positively and fully engaged with the various initiatives of the international community that have aimed at achieving resolve the conflict between us and the Israelis, including the Arab Peace Initiative which was recognized by the Security Council in its resolution 1515 of 2013.

We continued on this path with the administration of President Trump from the start of his tenure with the same positive engagement and we welcomed his launching of the initiative of peace and I have met with him numerous times.

We awaited his peace initiative with utmost patience but we were shocked by his decisions and actions that completely contradict the rule and commitment of his administration towards the peace process. So in November 2017 his administration issued a decision to [close the PLO office in Washington, DC](#). He then announced his recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and thus transferred his country's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and he even boasts that he has removed the issues of Jerusalem refugees, settlements and security off the negotiation table.

All such decisions threaten the Palestinian national cause and constitute an assault on international law and relevant UN resolutions. [The US administration went even further in its assault by cutting assistance to the Palestinian National Authority, the UNRWA and Palestinian hospitals in occupied East Jerusalem](#). Then they're speaking now about humanitarian aid. Even the humanitarian aid has been cut off.

With all of these decisions this administration has reneged on all previous US commitments and even undermined the two-state solution and revealed its false claims about the humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people.

It's really ironic that the American administration still talk about what they call the deal of the century, but what is left for this administration to give to the Palestinian people? Only humanitarian solutions, because when they remove off of the negotiation table Jerusalem, refugees and security- what is left?

What is left as a political solution? The U.S. Congress continues to insist on considering the PLO, which is recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by the overwhelming majority of countries of the world including Israel, as a terrorist organization.

And by the way, the PLO is recognized by Israel; however, the U.S. Congress claims that the PLO is a terrorist organization at a time when the State of Palestine cooperates with the majority of countries of the world, including the U.S., to combat terrorism.

Then why is this animosity against the Palestinian people who are suffering under the yolk of an occupation duly supported by the U.S.? I would like to tell them, our positions are firm and clear for all to see and we challenge you if we have committed a single mistake in our long journey- however the Congress comes out of the blue to say that the PLO is a terrorist organization. How come?

For years we have affirmed our readiness to the U.S. administration to establish a Palestinian-American committee that will examine the legal and political status of the PLO as a means of proving to them that the PLO is committed to achieving peace and combating terrorism as well as to also demonstrate that the Congress legislation regarding the PLO is arbitrary, unlawful and unjustified and deliberately ignores the official agreement with the U.S. administration to combat terrorism; an agreement which we have also concluded with 83 other countries.

We have protocols with 83 countries under the heading or the title of 'Combating Terrorism' including the U.S., however the Congress calls us terrorists.

Despite of all of this and from this platform I renew my call to President Trump

to walk back his decisions regarding Jerusalem, refugees and settlements. Which contravene with international law and UN resolutions as well as the understandings that we have reached in order to salvage the prospects of peace and to achieve stability and security for future generations.

By the way, this is an example of those understanding, this is a letter duly signed between the U.S. administration and Palestine regarding all these causes that are now just ignored. Ladies and gentlemen, consistent with our commitment to peace and the two-state solution and the path of negotiations to achieve, a path we have never refused and I do challenge you to tell me about any single time where we refused to come to the negotiation table.

To the contrary. We have been invited more than once by more than one country here and they told us, they invited us to sit with Netanyahu and in every single time I accepted and I do challenge you to tell me that I have refused once or if they have, on the other hand, accepted once.

So we have never refused these negotiations with a view to rescuing the peace process and I came before the Security Council on the 20th of February this year and presented an initiative calling for the convening of an international peace conference based on the relevant UN resolutions and the internationally-endorsed terms of reference and parameters. Such a conference should involve broad international participation that includes regional and international stakeholders led by the parliament members of the Security Council and the Quartet.

We shall circulate this initiative in its entirety to you and hope you will support it. Here I reiterate that we are not against negotiations, in the least, and we have never rejected negotiations on any single day and we will continue to extend our hands for peace. We only believe in peace. Peace is the only path. We don't believe in terrorism and violence. And we spared no occasion to reiterate this belief. Then what?

If you're speaking about UN resolutions, okay, these UN resolutions had not... not a single UN resolution has been respected by Israel. Then you are speaking about negotiations and solutions? What kind of negotiations and solutions? Peace in our region cannot be realized without an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital and with all the holy sites.

Some people try to outsmart us and they say okay, your capital is in East Jerusalem. No, I'm sorry- this is a manipulation of words. This means here or there or whichever region that are surrounding Jerusalem. No. Our capital is East Jerusalem and not in East Jerusalem.

And please don't try to outsmart us. Whether Abu-Dis or in East Jerusalem and then you can pick and choose an area here or there. No. East Jerusalem which has been occupied in 1967 is our capital. There's no peace otherwise and there is no peace with a state of temporary borders. By the way, they invented this idea of state with temporary borders. Okay, we will give you a state but with unknown borders.

You know what, this is exactly a state like Israel with unknown borders. And then let us talk. No. You want a state with very well-defined borders and rights and then we can co-exist with the Israelis, but otherwise no.

Here you are 183 states. Plus another country that has recognized us which is Colombia. However, this will, I will continue and this will come in my speech. I thus call upon all the countries of the world that have not yet recognized the state of Palestine this long overdue recognition. I can no longer see a convincing reason for the continued delay of the recognition of Palestine by

some countries.

In this context, I wish to draw your attention to the fact that in 2019 the State of Palestine will chair the Group of 77 and China. By the way, ten minutes ago I met in another conference room his excellency President Sissi who announced that we have been freely elected by 144 countries to chair the Group of 77 and China.

Nevertheless, there are some countries saying that we recognize both countries, or maybe we recognize Israel but we don't recognize Palestine. So what? If you claim that you recognize the two states and you recognize Israel but you don't recognize Palestine then this is a conundrum. What's your interest?

It's unacceptable and we tell these countries- yes, you have to recognize Palestine. This doesn't mean that we will not go for negotiations; on the contrary. This will bolster our international position and we will be able with your support to go to negotiations when you recognize the State of Palestine and this recognition should not be unilateral. You should not only recognize one state and not the other.

No. You have to recognize both states. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to remind you again that Israel has not implemented any one of the hundreds of General Assembly resolutions. There are 705 resolutions issued by the General Assembly since 1947 to date and Security Council resolutions since 1948 to date not a single resolution has been implemented by Israel and unfortunately I would like to be very frank and honest.

Israel is supported by the US because the General Assembly and other countries- when we ask them, they just agree, when we ask them, they gave us 139 votes and 42 were actually abstained. Those who opposed were only four countries. Until when Israel will act with impunity? Until when Israel will act and rebel as it likes supported by whomever it likes?

Ladies and gentlemen, we are resisting the Israeli occupation by way of legitimate means that have been decided by your international organization. We, the only means which we used is the peaceful, popular resistance. Is this illegal? On the other hand, the settlers are using arms against Palestinians?

They barge cities and towns and villages with arms. I'm not here speaking about the IDF. I'm speaking about the Israeli settlers. But we will continue to refuse using and reject violence and we reject all kinds of arms and we will never accept using weapons and we call upon the world to pursue the efforts of nuclear disarmament and even traditional disarmament.

Now we have a problem in Khan al-Ahmar. Israel is adamant on destroying this region and this region has been populated for more than 50 years but if it destroys this village it is thus destroying the unity of the West Bank. It will be divided into north and south. Do you agree to this? Do you condone this? Not to mention the aggressions against Al-Aqsa. Do you remember the aggressions, the assault against Al-Aqsa?

Now we are told that the Israeli supreme court will issue a decision to divide Al-Aqsa, spacially and time-wise. For sure this is totally unacceptable and I'm sure that those with chivalry, dignity and peace lovers will not accept this and Israel should bear the brunt. Such thuggery should come to an end. Because it makes no sense. Every single day a decision is passed by that court as if we don't exist.

We managed to get a resolution from the UN for international protection

because every day we are attacked and we are incapable of protecting ourselves; okay, a resolution was passed but who will implement this resolution? And very honestly it's insufficient for the General Assembly to pass a resolution that remains without implementation exactly like other resolutions.

The General Assembly should also respect its resolutions but to pass a resolution and then we applaud the resolution and we cheer it and then what? Please guide us, tell us how can we implement such resolutions? This is your responsibility.

In support to our people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip through legitimate institutions we refuse that this support be considered as a substitute for a solution. Because humanitarian aid, you know what, our cause has many humanitarian aspects but without a political solution- really we don't need such humanitarian aid. Don't fool us and tell us that you are helping us. Actually we are after the right to self-determination of our people.

Full stop. No single people on earth does not enjoy the rights to self-determination. We are 13 million Palestinians all over the world. Why are we denied the right to self-determination? By the way, this will not harm anybody. We need to establish our independent state which will live side by side with the Israeli state. Where is the mistake here? Where is the crime here?

We continue to exert genuine, serious efforts to end the division and to achieve reconciliation, despite the many obstacles to achieving these aims we continue to uphold our responsibilities towards our people to date. We express our appreciation to our Arab brethren, in particular the Arab Republic of Egypt, for the efforts undertaken to end this division, hoping that they will be rendered successful.

We made an agreement with an Egyptian sponsorship on the 12th of October and the agreement is so simple: The Palestinian government will carry out its responsibilities in Gaza and in the West Bank. Then we will build our state on the basis of unified law, unified authority, unified regime and only one single legitimate armed forces. We reject the idea of militias. However, this agreement has not been accepted and so far it has not been approved.

Maybe in the coming few days we'll witness the last round of talks and then maybe we will take another action. Ladies and gentlemen, I want to conclude as follows: The Palestinian people, 13 million human beings, unless we are not viewed as human beings by some. We are not redundant. Notwithstanding how big a population is, it's not redundant. Why are we treated as redundant people that should be got rid of? This is totally unacceptable.

However we are patient and we are steadfast and we believe in peace. But we just need to be viewed as humans. We are not redundant. We have concluded agreements with the U.S. administration and the U.S. administration has reneged on all these agreements. However, we are committed and we will abide by our part of the agreement. However, if they reneged on these agreements we will not abide. Thereby, it takes two to tango so an agreement should be respected by both parties. I will respect it from A-Z. However, if the U.S. administration fails to respect the agreement we will not be able to hold our part thereof.

The U.S. acts as a mediator. However, now we view the U.S. with new eyes. The U.S. cannot be a mediator single-handedly. We have the Quartet. Okay, they can join the Quartet. Any country can join the Quartet whether it's in Europe, the U.S., the Americas, Africa, even the Arab countries. Anyone can join the Quartet to act as mediators between ourselves and the Israelis. But the U.S. alone? No, because they are too much biased to Israel.

There are also agreements with Israel starting with the Oslo agreement and the Paris agreement and all these agreements have been abrogated by Israel and we call upon Israel to re-engage in these agreements. Otherwise, we will not hold our part of those agreements. We have also concluded agreements with Hamas.

Our brothers in Egypt know that we held our side of the agreement but Hamas failed to fulfill its obligations according to the agreement. That's why we will not bear any responsibility in this regard and I would like this to be totally crystal clear.

We will not bear any responsibility if Hamas insists on refusing to abide by the agreement. In spite of all this and despite all this injustice from the world we will never resort to violence or terrorism. We will continue to combat violence and terrorism all over the globe. We will never accept any aggression against any country, whether this country recognizes us or doesn't recognize us, loves us or dislikes us.

There's a very important point: The U.S. administration said that the number of refugees is 40,000 only. I want to know the formula whereby you calculated this number. Just go to UNRWA, they definitely don't want to go back to UNRWA- they want to obliterate it altogether- the UNRWA was established in 1949 to help refugees until their question is solved and to this date this cause has not been solved, until now, out of 13 million we have six million refugees. Not 40,000 as per the U.S. administration. Such facts just come out of the blue. What is the formula of calculation? They just calculated and decided to remove the UNRWA from the picture?

Finally, I call upon our people to remain patient, steadfast and to continue to sacrifice until we achieve independence and self-determination and to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital and not in Jerusalem. I pay tribute to all freedom-loving countries and peoples and our martyrs and I would like to tell all Palestinians: Israel considers them as criminals.

Why? In Israel there are thousands who are used to assaulting everybody and they're considering? Why is the man who killed Rabin a hero while our people are criminals? I pay tribute our hero martyrs and prisoners of war. I would like to tell you all that soon the dawn of freedom and independence will shine and occupation will go into the darkness of history and peace be upon you."

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