

**State of Palestine
Palestine Liberation Organization**

President of the State of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas'

Address To

The United Nations Human Rights Council

Geneva

October 28, 2015

Your Excellency the President of the Human Rights Council,

The Honorable High Commissioner for Human Rights,

Distinguished members of the Human Rights Council,

Ladies and gentlemen, representatives of civil society organizations,

What we warned of has happened. The status of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the continued Israeli occupation and its practices, is the worst and most critical since year 1948. This calls for a strong and decisive intervention and requires shouldering the responsibility, before it is too late, by the United Nations, its specialized international agencies and bodies, and its member states, most particularly the Security Council which is requested, more urgently than any time before, to set up a special regime for international protection for the Palestinian people, immediately and urgently.

Here we would like to stress that peace, security and stability will not be achieved unless the Israeli occupation is ended and the independence of the state of Palestine is obtained, with East Jerusalem as its capital, along the June 4th, 1967 borders, and in accordance with the international legitimacy resolutions, not by using wanton force, colonial settlement, collective punishment, house demolitions, field executions, denial of the other, and affronting the dignity of our people as well as propagating poisonous hatred and enmity against them.

I have repeatedly warned over the past years of the consequences of what has been happening in Jerusalem and its surroundings, which includes tightening the noose around the necks of the population, and violation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, in addition to the measures undertaken by the successive Israeli governments, especially after year 2000, to systematically remold the identity of Jerusalem and its historical and demographic character, including increased settlement construction, illegal excavations under Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Old City, setting up walls to alienate Palestinian neighborhoods, closing its national institutions and tightening the noose around the necks of the population by different means to drive them out of the holy city.

I have noted over and over again that pressure will generate an explosion, and that the violations committed by settlers and extremist, protected by the Israeli occupation forces, against our Christian and Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, namely the plans that endanger Al-Aqsa Mosque, in order to alter the pre-1967 status quo and beyond, the thing which will turn the political conflict into a religious one that will have grave consequences on all of us, and we will never accept nor acknowledge that.

Here we come today to your esteemed council, to reiterate the importance of its role and resolutions on how necessary it is for Israel, the occupying power, to respect international law; the international human rights law and the international humanitarian law.

In this respect, we reaffirm the importance of implementing the declaration released by the International Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention on the full and unconditional applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the occupied state of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, which also provided that it countries are required, individually and collectively, to meet their responsibilities in respecting and implementing this deceleration forthwith.

Israel breaches, systematically and regularly, the rules and principle of international law and the international humanitarian law. It acts as a state above the law; undeterred, unpunished and unaccountable. On one hand it transfers part of its citizens to take over the land of the Palestinian people, as part of a colonial settlement plan, looting its natural resources and building roads, walls and transportation systems with a goal to present a new fait accompli to be embedded into a new racial-discrimination-based regime of their own.

Furthermore, it allows those settlers, protected by its military forces, to assault and commit crimes against Palestinian civilians, vandalize their property and places of worship, and defile their holy sites in Palestinian cities and villages. They have even formed armed terrorist gangs known with names such as 'the price tag' and others. Those have committed killings and arson attacks, the latest of which was burning to death the Dawabsheh family, and Mohammed Abu Khdeir, where the terrorist perpetrators are still at large and unpunished.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Long-lasting hopelessness, depression, throttling and pressure, as well as lack of a sense of safety and security under which our people has been living for a long time now, are all factors that breed frustration amongst our youth and propels them into the state we witness today: despair, rebellion against reality and revolt for the sake of their dignity, homeland, people and holy sites which have been desecrated every other second again and again for seven decades now, under an occupation that does not quit killing, torturing, looting and imprisoning our sons, daughters and grandchildren.

Our people's angry upheaval and the recent successive series of events are the inevitable outcome of what we had previously warned of, including the violations and crimes we previously reported, as well as failure of the international community to redress this injustice and distress suffered by our people, most particularly our youth.

As part of Israel's persistence to act as a state above international law, its occupation force has recently stepped up its criminal practices to the point where it performed field executions against defenseless Palestinian civilians, including children, and it has persisted to terrorize our citizens by applying an approach of collective punishment, including house demolitions, forced displacement, blockading entire neighborhoods and arbitrary arrests, in addition to putting behind Israeli bars over six-thousand Palestinian prisoners. It is unacceptable for the current situation to persist, for it would kill the last shred of hope for the two-state-solution-based peace.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Haven't you wondered; for how long will this protracted Israeli occupation of our land last? For how long will our people remain dispossessed of the full and undiminished enjoyment of their rights as protected by international legitimacy, most notably their fundamental right to life and self-determination, and their right to build their independent and sovereign state with East Jerusalem as its capital as and to live as human beings in accordance with the provisions of international conventions and treaties. Is that too much to ask?

Isn't it time for the international community to take a further step from merely extolling the justice of the Palestinian cause to taking practical measures and procedures which would actually serve such justice to my Palestinian people and establish peace and security as a tangible reality?

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I come to you from Palestine, the land of prophets and religions, carrying the message of a people who has been eager for freedom and independence; I come to you relaying a message of hope and tolerance sent across to you by my people who aspire to achieve their rights and have justice brought to them, and obtaining their freedom and independence, while extending, on their and their leadership's behalf, the sincerest regards and appreciation to your esteemed Council, and highly valuing the efforts undertaken by you to protect and uphold human rights and freedoms in the State of Palestine and the entire world.

It is noteworthy to commend, in this respect, your valuable and objective positions and efforts intended to enable our people to enjoy their freedom and right to self-determination and protection of their fundamental human rights, as reflected in many of your resolutions. I would like also to express our sincere gratitude for your honorable Council, for adopting important resolutions, in its regular and special sessions, which unveil the critical human rights conditions lived in the occupied state of Palestine and the suffering of our people resultant from the Israeli occupation and its atrocities and aggressive practices.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to underline the principal role assumed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and special rapporteurs, as well as the work done by the independent international fact-finding missions set up by the Human Rights Council to look into human rights violations, and advise on acts that qualify as war crimes and crimes against humanity. Such missions include the fact-finding missions, established by the Council in its special sessions, in relation to the human rights situation in the occupied state of Palestine, with which Israel unfortunately refused to cooperate. Thanks to the efforts made by the sisterly countries of Egypt and Jordan, those missions were able to perform some of their duties and submit their reports which were considered and handled by the Council in a manner that established the measures of responsibility and accountability in a pursuit to serve justice.

I would like to invite all the special rapporteurs once again to come to Palestine and see the situation for themselves.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Continued and aggravated Israeli attacks against our people shows that it is strictly necessary to maintain the seventh item titled as "The human rights status in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories" as a regular item on your Council's agenda until such time the occupation comes to an end. Here I would like to urgently call for a review, by the Council, of the reports and resolutions relevant to Palestine in order to assess the progress made in implementing the recommendations thereof, and make practical suggestions conducive to bringing the suffering of the Palestinian people to an end, and guaranteeing their full enjoyment of their rights, since international law was created to be enforced, not negotiated upon. Therefore, the entire international community must act to ensure that international law is objectively respected, and must relinquish selectivity and double-standards.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite all the obstacles laid by the occupation, we will press on with building the institutions of our state in accordance with international standards, and we will continue to enforce the rule of law, invoke democracy and transparency, protect women rights, promote equality amongst all members of society without racial or religious discrimination, promulgate a culture of peace, tolerance and dialogue, and abide by the approach of peaceful popular resistance. In practice, we have had already made substantial progress, as vouched for by several international actors, and we will proceed with our efforts and endeavors, supported by our brethren and friends, to make that state a concrete reality.

In this respect, we will continue to join international organizations and conventions, in order to safeguard our rights and protect our people, we will also continue to harmonize our domestic laws and regulations with international practices and standards. We will proceed to protecting our people who are living under occupation by using all peaceful and legal means, including continuing to work with the International Criminal Court concerning Israeli crimes, including field executions and violations of the rights of our youth and children. We will also act with the required patience, wisdom and courage necessary to protect our people and maintain our political and national achievements; attained following decades of struggle, perseverance and sacrifices offered by our people.

We reaffirm the unity of our land and people, and reiterate our rejection of any interim or partial solutions. We also seek to form a national unity government that operates in line with the Palestine Liberation Organization program, conduct elections and convene the Palestinian National Council.

From here I once again call upon our Palestinian people wherever they are, to further unite, stick together and be vigilant against the schemes designed to forestall our national enterprise and our hard work in building and development, while stressing that we will not spare any effort to defend, protect and enable our people to live in freedom, security and wellbeing in their homeland.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the 137 states which recognized Palestine, and we also thank the parliaments which recommended their governments to do so. In this context, we hereby invite the countries that have not yet recognized Palestine to do so. Those who say that they support the two-state solution must recognize two states, not only one.

We also welcome international, European and Arab efforts which call for expanding international participation to achieve peace, including having the Security Council issue a resolution that includes clear standards for achieving peace based on the two-state solution along the 1967 lines, and set a timeline to end the occupation with international supervision, and launch that it in an international peace conference. In the meanwhile, Israel would release the fourth tranche of prisoners and halt all of its settlement activities so that the State of Palestine can live side by side with the State of Israel. It is no longer useful to waste time in negotiations just for the sake of negotiations, what is required is the ending of occupation in accordance with the international legitimacy resolutions. Until such time, we reiterate that the UN Security council is required to establish a special regime of international protection for our Palestinian people.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Israel shattering the foundations upon which the political, economic and security agreements with us were built, in addition to the measures undertaken by the successive Israeli governments which led to the obstruction of the transitional phase which is meant to realize the independence of our state, prompts us to reassert our position which was proclaimed on the 30th of last month in New York, that we cannot continue to be bound, unilaterally, by the agreements signed with Israel while it fails to show commitment thereto. Israel must bear all of its responsibilities as an occupying power, because the status quo cannot continue, and we continue to stress that we will start the implementation of this declaration by all peaceful and legal means.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our Palestinian people seek to obtain their freedom and independence on their homeland and in their own state based on the 1967 borders, alongside the state of Israel, where the two states will live in peace, security and good neighborhood, with full respect to the UN charter, and in keeping with international resolutions, in addition to solving the Palestinian refugees problem in accordance with resolution 194 and the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as releasing all prisoners.

In these critical and defining moments, I extend an honest invitation to the members of the Israeli people, and invite them for a right and justice-based peace that guarantees security and stability for all, while reasserting from this humanitarian and foremost forum, that our hands remain outstretched for a just peace that will guarantee my people's rights, freedoms and humanitarian dignity. One again I would like to say to the intellectuals, opinionists and politicians of the Israeli society that peace is affordable and within reach, and the answer is simple; your state must end its occupation of our land, your oppressive war machine must stop its aggression our people, settlement activities must be ceased and the criminal acts of settlers must be stopped, thereby all of us will be able to enjoy peace, security and stability.

There is nothing worse than despair and hopelessness and distrust in the present and the future. Our young men and women, O neighbors, aspire to live in an atmosphere of freedom and dignity in order to be able to build their future and life in a safe and favorable environment. There are just like your children: they have the same dreams and ambitions and dream of a safer and more stable tomorrow. Your occupation of our land is the ultimate form of injustice, and is the root cause of all the tragedies our people have long suffered from, and it is the reason that keeps our region and its peoples spiraling in a cycle of violence. We do not want violence, yet the continuation of occupation would expand the scope of violence, chaos, extremism and bloodshed.

I'm not overreacting when I say; it is about time that your leaders had the courage to make rightful and honest decisions before it is too late, to make the two-state solution a concrete reality, because this might be the last convenient chance for this solution, for no one knows, later on, what the winds of change, sweeping across the region, are carrying along. Security cannot be realized through occupation and military and discriminatory force. It is only achieved by recognition of the rights of the other.

We say to the international community and powerful actors: Isn't it enough, ladies and gentlemen, [for a people to endure] seventy years of suffering, injustice, oppression and deprivation, and perpetuation of the longest occupation known to mankind in modern history, under a biased system that discriminates between this blood and that blood, this color and that color; this one is valuable and that one is worthless?

It is the duty of everyone of conscience, everyone who believes in right and justice and the dignity of mankind regardless of any considerations, to raise their voice and

say out loud: Stop these daily crimes committed against my people, have their rights resorted to them and refrain from leveling your fire against them; let them live their lives and build their future on their homeland Palestine. Should our people not enjoy freedom, dignity and full sovereignty over their national soil, airspace, territorial waters and borders, no one would be able to enjoy peace, security and stability.

Our people will not be put down, will not surrender nor succumb. Our mothers raised us from day one to be resilient. From our end, we will continue to defend our people and cause with all peaceful, legal and political means.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We will not accept that the name of Palestinian leader Haj Amin Al-Husseini be embroiled in a manner that is incompatible with historical facts, and that manipulates the sentiments of the Jewish people who had been victims of the most horrendous crime known in modern history committed by Nazis. We also refuse incitement and misrepresentation of the history and struggle of the Palestinian people to obtain their freedom and independence.

We do not seek anything but to live in pride, honor and glory, like all the peoples of the world. So do not push my people into further despair, be their sisters and brothers in humanity and be supportive of ensuring their rights are respected. In doing so, you serve peace and protect Israel from itself and the arrogance of its force. Alas, how short a human's memory span is, when a victim becomes the abuser!

Once again, I greet and thank you. Let justice, peace and harmony prevail in my homeland Palestine.