

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Abbas
President of the State of Palestine
on the occasion of
International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

28 November 2018

H.E. Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

H.E Ms. Maria Fernandez Espinosa, President of the United Nations General Assembly,

H.E. Mr. Mao Zhaoxu, President of the Security Council,

H.E. Mr. Cheikh Niang, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I convey greetings from the State of Palestine and the Palestinian people to all of our friends around the world joining in the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I reaffirm today our profound appreciation and gratitude to all countries extending invaluable support for the just cause of our people, including through their support to our annual resolutions on the Question of Palestine at the United Nations, and the maintenance of their principled positions on the basis of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, despite all the pressures and attempts to undermine these legal and moral positions. We are grateful their unwavering support and efforts on this basis to end this injustice and to achieve lasting peace and security in our region and in the world.

The strength of your positions in these international forums reinforces the resilience of the Palestinian people in Palestine and in exile in the diaspora and reinforces their belief in the fairness of the international conscience and gives them hope to continue their struggle to realize freedom and dignity.

Today, we also renew our gratitude to non-governmental organizations and civil society, and to all our brothers, sisters, friends and all freedom and peace-loving peoples around the world who continue their steadfast support our people. We are grateful for their solidarity and support for the rights and legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people aimed at the achievement of their freedom and independence and the realization of a just and lasting peace.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations has rightly defended our cause, placing it as a priority on the agenda of the international community. The United Nations has extended a helping hand to our people, and has legislated resolutions and recommendations that constitute the foundations that cannot be bypassed in the efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution. We reaffirm here the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine, which must be upheld until this question is satisfactorily resolved in all its aspects in accordance with international law and the principles of justice.

In this regard, we express our deep appreciation for the efforts exerted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Mr. António Guterres, and the efforts exerted by the United Nations

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chair, H.E. Ambassador Mr. Cheikh Niang of Senegal, as well as the Bureau, and all Members and Observers of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, and also to the many agencies assisting the Palestinian people, with UNRWA at the forefront assisting the Palestine refugees. We are grateful for all of the serious efforts in support of our rights and a just peace.

The General Assembly, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council and other United Nations organs and bodies, including the International Court of Justice, have adopted strong and principled resolutions in favor of our just cause. We must reiterate, however, our deep regret about the lack of implementation of these resolutions, which has compounded the conflict over the many decades and inflicted grave hardships on the Palestinian people. This unjust situation has deepened convictions that there is indeed a double standard when it comes to resolutions regarding Israel, as those resolutions are not being implemented and Israel is being allowed to continue behaving as though it is a State above the law, with complete impunity and grave consequences.

On this day, each year, we recall General Assembly resolution 181 (II), of 29 November 1947, by which the Assembly unfairly decided to partition Mandate Palestine without the consent of the Palestinian people and which was adopted thirty years following the Balfour Declaration in 1917, in the aftermath of which the 1948 *Nakba* that befell the indigenous Palestinian people, forcibly uprooting them from their lands, dispossessing and dispersing them throughout the region. We recall also Israel's occupation of the rest of the Palestinian lands in 1967, comprised of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Despite signing a peace accord with Israel in 1993, which stipulated that by 1999 all final status issues should be resolved and the independence of the State of Palestine on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, should be achieved, living side by side with the State of Israel in security and good neighborliness; despite the Palestine Liberation Organization's recognition of the State of Israel in 1993; despite Palestine's fulfillment of its obligations under the agreements signed and the establishment of national institutions respecting the rule of law; despite the recognition accorded to Palestine as a State by 139 countries and the upgrading of its status to an Observer State in 2012 and its accession to more than 100 international treaties and organizations; and despite fostering a culture of peace and combatting terrorism; Israel, the occupying Power, still denies the Palestinian people their right to freedom and independence in their own land and refuses to reciprocate recognition and persists with its colonial schemes with the theft of our land and transfer of its settlers in grave breach of the Geneva Conventions, the most recent of which have been the plans to demolish the village of Khan Al Ahmar and imposition of the "Jewish Nation State" law.

Against the backdrop of this prolonged injustice, the international community has sought to uphold its responsibilities towards the question of Palestine, including towards the Palestine refugees, who now nearly 6 million people, through the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which plays a very vital role and

which requires all of our strong support pending a just solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III). On this occasion, we renew our gratitude to those countries extending their support to UNRWA and those who have pledged additional support following the recent punitive US measures against UNRWA in an attempt to undermine the legitimate status and rights of the Palestine refugees.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

After more than a half century of the Israeli occupation, a horizon for peace remains absent as Israel persists with its military occupation of the Palestinian land and imposition of a racist regime – Apartheid – by which it continues to control the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and prevents the Palestinian people from exercising its inalienable right to self-determination and reneges on all agreements it has signed. Here, I must ask: Until will Israel be dealt with as a State above the law, and when will the international community uphold its obligations regarding this situation?

In this regard, I must remind that we have not abdicated our obligations under the agreements signed with Israel and that we continue to extend our hands for the realization of a just peace based on United Nations resolutions and the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders. I must remind that we have never rejected negotiations and that we have presented our peace initiative to the Security Council in February of this year and remain committed to the objectives and ideals of peace and tolerance and combatting terrorism in our region and globally. We also remain committed to ensuring that the capital of our State, East Jerusalem, will be open for all believers and all faithful of the monotheistic religions.

At the same time, we continue to exert efforts to unify our land and our people and to achieve reconciliation through Egyptian mediation and to restore the national consensus government control and functions in the Gaza Strip, as in the West Bank, with one law, one government and one legitimate security force.

As we face this dangerous political deadlock, I call upon the international community to uphold its obligations and responsibilities and not permit the continued violation of international law. At the same time, we call on all States that believe in the two-State solution and recognize the State of Israel to recognize the State of Palestine as well. This recognition will help reinforce justice and give our people hope until the day they realize their long-overdue freedom and independence.

We appeal to you to uphold your obligations not to recognize the illegal situation created by Israel's policies and measures in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. We also appeal to you not to provide support and assistance to Israel in entrenching and perpetuating this illegal situation and to distinguish between the territory of the occupying Power and the occupied territory in order to ensure accountability and to contribute to ending this unjust situation.

We are fully committed to international law, relevant UN resolutions, and the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders, and remain ready to give every opportunity to regional and international efforts, based on longstanding terms of references, to achieve a just peace. But if efforts fail to achieve such solution, the Palestinian people will not disappear, nor will they accept oppression and injustice as their fate. Our people will continue their legitimate struggle for the realization of their inalienable rights and will strive for equal rights for all in historic Palestine without discrimination.

On this occasion, we reaffirm, once again, that our struggle is not directed against Judaism as a religion, because we respect all religions, but rather is against the colonial occupation of our land and people and the denial of our inalienable rights, including to self-determination.

Despite decades of disappointment, we maintain our conviction in the rule of law and international institutions. The State of Palestine will continue to engage in all efforts to further strengthen the rule of international law, including the strengthening of its institutions and the empowerment of its people, especially women and youth.

Respect for international law is the cornerstone of peace. But neither respect, nor peace, can be achieved through speeches alone; words and commitments must be matched by practical actions to implement the law. On this day of international solidarity with the Palestinian people, we stress that this is a pressing issue and urge that no effort be spared to achieve a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine.

We remain grateful to all those resolutely defending international law, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the goal of peace. We await the day when we may together celebrate the freedom of our people in the independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and welcome all of you in the city of Jerusalem, whose original name is the City of Peace.