



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE, TUN DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA**

**AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE
“SOUTHEAST ASIAN SUPPORT FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE”
ON 28 FEBRUARY 2020 (FRIDAY), AT 3.30 PM
AT HALL 6 A, LEVEL 1, KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE (KLCC)**

1. I've always had mixed feelings whenever I'm invited to attend a conference concerning the Palestinians and Palestine. My stand and Malaysia's stand is well-known. We support the Palestinian cause all the time. Now also we will be supportive.
2. I am proud and happy for our commitment and continuous efforts to address their plight.
3. On the other hand, I am sad that despite all our efforts to protest and demand for justice and the end of the oppression, their sufferings persist.
4. I am also angry that powerful nations and self-proclaimed defenders of justice, freedom and democracy are keeping silent or worse, party to the perpetrations of injustices and cruelties inflicted on the Palestinians, wantonly by the Tel Aviv regime.
5. Most hurtful is at times, when despair creeps in, and the sense of helplessness overwhelms us. Everyone speaks of justice and freedom but turns a blind eye when friends and allies commit all these wrong deeds.
6. But I hope that such feelings are fleeting.
7. We bounce back, just like today, stronger and re-affirming our commitment to the cause and we will never stop until we see Palestinians and Palestine get the justice, freedom, peace and security they deserve.
8. I would like to congratulate the organisers and its executive committee for their commitment and persistence in organising this event. It is a noble effort.
9. The theme for this year's conference - "Southeast Asian Support for the Rights of the Palestinian People" – aptly highlights the key message on the "*Rights of the Palestinian People*" consistent and in line with what the United Nations (UN) stands for.
10. I am equally honoured that the Committee had chosen Malaysia as the host for this Conference. I believe this choice reflects the strong and consistent position that Malaysia has always taken with regard to the Palestinian plight. This conference is indeed a testimony of our collective re-affirmation of our undivided stand on the plight of the Palestinians.

ASEAN COOPERATION

11. Having had the opportunity to see the growth of ASEAN, from the very beginning in 1967 until today, it is clear that the grouping has succeeded in sustaining itself. Not many other regional groupings could claim such durability.
12. ASEAN has made the integration of countries with different levels of economic development, political systems, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds a success. It is a story worthy to be told and shared. These remarkable achievements in economic integration and cooperation registered over the past years were not achieved merely by chance but through design, through sheer hard work, commitment and above all, dedication. In many ways these are reflections of the values and determination shared across ASEAN nations by its leaders and people.
13. I urge ASEAN member states to continue our cooperation not only in the realms of which we have been consistently growing together but also in the pursuit of justice and peace for the oppressed. Our collective voice regionally should espouse more than just economic development. We should also extend a united front in supporting the Rights of the Palestinians. This is the primary purpose of this peace Conference.
14. This Conference today is a congregation of global representatives - individually and collectively we can utilise all the platforms available, both ASEAN and non-ASEAN, for us to continue voicing our concerns and register our outrage over the inhumane and barbaric acts that the Tel Aviv regime has inflicted on the Palestinians.
15. We are duty bound and this responsibility is further amplified when powerful nations that had styled themselves as defenders of justice and freedom choose to be silent while the atrocities are being committed. And we cannot afford to practise double standards where gross injustice is concerned.

UNITED NATIONS AND THE “DEAL OF THE CENTURY”

16. The position of the United Nations on the two-State solution has been defined throughout the years by the relevant Security Council and General Assembly. They have reiterated that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be resolved according to UN resolutions and international law. It is no wonder why so many nations including Malaysia have rejected the so-called “Deal of the Century”.
17. The unilateral announcement endorsed and instigated by the Israelis without any attempts for dialogue or negotiation with Palestinian representatives from the West Bank or Gaza is a mockery of international efforts to find a solution to the Palestinian – Israeli ongoing crisis. Furthermore, to call it the Deal of the Century bespeaks of the ultimate in dishonest brokerage.
18. The deal foregoes key issues at stake for a just solution. The plan would abolish the right of return for Palestinian refugees displaced by the 1948 war and their descendants, a key Palestinian stand.
19. The deal is contrary to Security Council resolutions and the principle of a permanent two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, the realisation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and the right of all States in the region to live in peace and security. It does not respect previously signed agreements and commitments.

20. To suggest East Jerusalem as Israel's national capital would grant Palestine limited autonomy in parts of the West Bank, if at all. At the same time, it would allow Israel to annex all its settlements there and keep nearly all of East Jerusalem. Thankfully, this has been deemed illegal by the international community.
21. Israel will get Washington's permission to annex all of its illegal settlements, now littered across the West Bank, as well as the vast agricultural basin of the Jordan Valley. I believe that under international law, annexation of an occupied territory is considered a War Crime!
22. Israel will continue to have military control over the entire West Bank. In the proposed agreement, Palestine would not be allowed an army, whereas Israel will control its security, borders, coastal waters and airspace. The occupied state would be forced to accept the plan within four years. Otherwise, Israel will have a free hand to start plundering yet more Palestinian territory.
23. Malaysia finds the proposal utterly unacceptable and grossly unjust.
24. Let us not forget that the international community back then was responsible for the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and drowning the existing state of Palestine into anonymity and oblivion.

THE NAKBA

25. It was on the 14th of May 1948 that the state of Israel came into being literally with blood on its hands as a result of the forcible seizure of villages and land from the Palestinians who had lived there from historical times.
26. The declaration of independence by Israel contrasts with the fate of Palestinians so much that the latter deems the date as the day of catastrophe.
27. The Holocaust lasted six years and the Nakba has been going on for more than 70 years! The pro-Israel nations were quick to hold a tribunal at Nuremberg to try Nazi war criminals but has any tribunal been established for the Palestinian victims?
28. Palestinians have always been advised to forget the past and start anew wherever they may be. The paradox is that they live out the consequences of the past every day as oppressed people under a violent military occupation; as a powerless minority in Israel, or as marginalised exiles in refugee camps in neighbouring countries. Yet the Israelis will not allow the world to forget the Holocaust and ironically it is the Palestinians who have been made to pay a heavy price.

CONCLUSION

29. While Malaysia wants to be friends with all countries and respect their sovereignty regardless of their ideological beliefs, we must continue to speak against injustices and in defending the rights of the oppressed.
30. Malaysia's foreign policy towards Palestine has remained the same since we became an independent nation. We will always support the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian Declaration of Independence proclaimed the establishment of the State of Palestine on 15 November 1988. Many countries, including Malaysia, promptly acknowledged it.

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31. While Malaysia remains supportive of any genuine efforts made by any party aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive peace to the Palestine-Israel conflict, Malaysia stands by its position that the creation of an independent State of Palestine through a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine is acceptable.
32. Some of you may recall that in November 2013 the Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War held a tribunal against the state of Israel for war crimes and crimes of genocide. Along with other civil society initiatives across the world, we hope that the International Criminal Court will take note of this blatant case of injustice of the century and institute proceedings against Israel.
33. On that note, I wish to again congratulate the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Perdana Global Peace Foundation for organising the Conference together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I would also like to thank the Malaysian NGOs, media and other agencies for their unswerving stand in solidarity with our Palestinian friends. I hope you will have a very successful Conference and a good stay in Malaysia.
34. With that, ladies and gentlemen, Bismillahir Rahman Nir Rahim, in the name of Allah the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, May He bless you and give you strength in your struggle for justice.

Thank you.