

Transcripción en inglés.

President Mahmoud Abbas Speech at UN General Assembly (9-20-17)

-We will now here the statement of his Excellency Mahmoud Abbas, president of the state of Palestine. I would request a protocol to escort his Excellency.
On behalf of the General Assembly I have the honour to welcome to the UN his Excellency Mahmoud Abbas, president of the state of Palestine and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mahmoud Abbas:

In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful,

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. President of the United Nations General Assembly, Ladies and Gentlemen, peace be upon you.

Twenty-four years have passed since the signing of the Oslo Accords, an interim agreement that set a five-year period for bringing an end to the Israeli occupation, granting hope to the Palestinian people that they would soon achieve independence within their State and achieve peace between Palestinians and Israelis. What is left of this hope today?

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We recognized the state of Israel on the 1967 borders. But Israel's continuous refusal to recognize these borders has put into question the mutual recognition we signed in Oslo in 1993.

Since my speech before your august Assembly last year, when I appealed for 2017 to be the year for ending the Israeli occupation of the territory of the State of Palestine, the Israeli Government has relentlessly pursued its settlement campaign on our land, in contravention of all international conventions and the relevant resolutions on the question of Palestine. It has also persisted with its flagrant disregard for the two-State solution, resorting to procrastination policies and tactics and devising pretexts to evade its responsibility to end its occupation of the territory of the State of Palestine.

Instead of addressing the underlying issues and resolving the root causes of the conflict, it has tried to divert international attention towards the secondary issues actually caused by its colonial policies. While we call – just as the international community continues to call – for an end to the Israeli occupation of the territory of our State, it incites and makes false accusations, pretends there is no Palestinian partner, and imposes unreasonable, obstructive conditions. Israel is well aware, as you all are,

that its occupation breeds incitement and violence, and this Israeli military occupation of our land has now lasted for over half a century.

Ten years ago we agreed to establish a tripartite committee comprising the US, Palestine and Israel to address the issue of incitement, and the decision lies with the US. This committee worked for some time, but then it was cancelled. And since then we who have been calling for reviving it, to no avail. So who is responsible for incitement and who is trying to let incitement continue?

It is very strange to hear some of those who hold the responsibility to end this occupation referring to it as a “partial occupation” or an “alleged occupation”. What do you mean by alleged occupation?! For 50 years we have languishing under the yoke of occupation and now somebody who is responsible speaks of an “alleged occupation”.

This, I believe, is unfair, wrong and unacceptable.

The continuation of this occupation is an affront to Israel and the international community. The United Nations bears a legal, political, moral and humanitarian obligation to end this occupation and enable the Palestinian people to live in freedom and prosperity in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem – the occupied East Jerusalem– as its capital, on the 4 June 1967 borders.

This is the responsibility of the international community.

Beyond any doubt, draining the quagmire of colonial occupation of our land and ending its unjust, oppressive and illegal practices against our people would have a great bearing to fight terrorism and deprive terrorist groups of one of the key rallying cries they exploit to promote their repugnant ideas. Therefore, we reiterate that ending the Israeli occupation of our land is of urgency and it is needed to supplement the efforts that we are all undertaking to confront such groups. We, the Palestinians, stand against local, regional and international terrorist organizations, regardless of its nature, its source or its character. We are against international terrorism and are fighting against it.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have explored every avenue and exerted far-reaching efforts to achieve peace with our Israeli neighbors, and together, with the Arab and Islamic States, have adopted an invaluable initiative – the Arab Peace Initiative – aimed at resolving the Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflict. According to this initiative, upon Israel’s withdrawal from the Palestinian and Arab territories, namely the Golan Heights and the Lebanese Sheb’a farms, occupied in 1967, the Arab and Islamic States would recognize Israel and normalize relations with it. What was the Israeli response to this initiative? 57 Arab and Islamic states said they are ready to recognize at once the State of Israel and normalize relations with it as soon it withdraws from these territories it occupied in 1967. And Israel is not interested.

There was also the 2003 Quartet Roadmap for peace, endorsed by the United Nations Security Council and accepted by Palestine. It was also rejected by the Israeli Government. So Israel is above the law.

And to break this stalemate in the peace process and ensure the success of peace efforts there came the French initiative – aimed at salvaging the peace process and the two-State solution – led to the holding the Paris Conference earlier this year, which was attended by seventy States and four international organizations. All these efforts met the rejection and boycotting by Israel. Furthermore, President Vladimir Putin of Russia, and President Xi Jinping of China, have both launched initiatives for peace. And the latest of these peace efforts, all of which we are thankful for, is being led by United States President Donald Trump. Where are these initiatives and why Israel is not accepting these initiatives?

On our part, we have also repeatedly tried to revive the peace process and called on the Israeli Prime Minister to affirm his commitment to the two-State solution and sit with us at the negotiations table to delineate the borders between Israel and the State of Palestine in order to open a path for meaningful negotiations to resolve all other final status issues. We sit down, delineate the borders and then discuss other matters. Unfortunately, it was rejected by the Prime Minister.

We continue our genuine efforts for success of the peace process and despite these efforts, Israel continues to breach its commitments and to obstruct efforts, by continuing to build settlements everywhere. There is no space left for the State of Palestine, which is unacceptable for us and for you. And you have the responsibility. Israel also rejects the two-State solution, and this represents a threat to both populations, the Israelis and the Palestinians alike. And this compels us to undertake a comprehensive, strategic review of the entire process.

Ladies and Gentleman,

A commitment by one side to peace is never enough to achieve peace.

We have warned in the past and continue to warn of Israeli policies... Either we are free or not free.

We have warned in the past and continue to warn of Israeli policies aimed at entrenching the occupation and colonial facts on the ground in East Jerusalem. These policies fuel religious animosity that could lead to a religious conflict. We have called on the Israeli Government to uphold the historic and legal status quo of the holy sites in the City. However, the Israeli Government, since its occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967 – and yes, Israel is an occupying power, Jerusalem is occupied – has repeatedly annexed Jerusalem by a unilateral decision. Israel just decided to annex Golan and it did so. We rejected then and still reject today alongside the whole international community, including the Security Council. There have been many resolutions adopted by the Security Council, the highest authority in the world, stating that this annexation process is illegal. To whom should we go? The Security Council's resolutions and the General Assembly's decisions are not implemented, so to whom should we go? We are not going towards terrorism or violence.

Jerusalem is an occupied city and Israel's decisions and practices there are null and void and illegal in their entirety. The same applies to all Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It is an occupied territory. Israel's attempts to change the historic status quo in Al-Quds and in particular vis-à-vis the status and integrity of Al Aqsa Mosque can only be described as playing with fire

and an infringement upon our responsibilities as well as those of brotherly Jordan. Both of us are responsible for the city. We caution the Israeli Government of the implications of such an aggression and we hold it fully responsible for the consequences. Don't ever try to go to a religious war. It is really dangerous, for you and for us. Our conflict is political, let it remain political. Stay away from religious issues.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentleman,

Despite this ongoing occupation and its oppressive policies and practices, we have been able to build the institutions of our State competently, which has been recognized by a majority of Member States of this organization. 138 States, among you. The majority of the membership. I seize this opportunity to once again thank all of those countries that have recognized the State of Palestine and that have voted for upgrading its status at the United Nations. By doing so you are redressing a part of the historic injustice that has been inflicted on our people and endured by our people. This also supports the objective of justice between Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East and across the world at large.

Last year before this August Assembly I stressed in my speech that the status quo in the occupied territory of the State of Palestine is not sustainable. However, as the situation has only deteriorated due to Israel's insistence on pursuing its occupation, aggressive policies and unending violations of international law, we must once again call on Israel, as the occupying Power, to fully respect and uphold all its obligations stemming from this occupation and to bear its consequences. We cannot continue to be an Authority without any authority, or to allow this occupation to continue without cost. We are fast approaching this point.

If they don't want the two-State solution and they don't want peace, let them bear their responsibilities and the consequences of these responsibilities. Because we are not going to bear any responsibilities in this case.

The two-State solution is today in jeopardy. We cannot as Palestinians stand still in the face of this threat targeting our national, political and social existence on our land, and endangering regional and international peace and security. We will have to take steps or look for alternatives to preserve our national existence and at the same time to keep open the prospects for peace and security.

However, all the options that we are seeking will be peaceful.

In such a situation, it is our right to search for alternatives that preserve our rights and protect our land and our people from an entrenching system of Apartheid. That regime came to an end in South Africa long time ago, but it still exists in Palestine. Is this acceptable? Can the world accept an Apartheid regime in the 21st century in Palestine? Why?

On the other hand, we have also called on the International Criminal Court. It is our right. If nobody wants to listen to us, then let us seek all avenues. So we have called on the International Criminal Court to open an investigation and to prosecute Israeli officials for their involvement in settlement activities and aggressions against our people, and we will continue to pursue our accessions to international conventions, protocols and organizations, as Palestine has acquired observer State status in

accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 67/19 of 2012. I will call for the convening of the Palestinian National Council in the near future to operationalize this strategic review.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We as Palestinians and Arabs, and the whole world have the choice of the international law. Our choice is the two-State solution on the 1967 borders, and we will grant every chance for the efforts being undertaken by President Donald Trump and the Quartet and international community at large to achieve a historic agreement or deal. We have heard that they are seeking a historic deal and we would like to thank them. We hope that this will take place. So we stress the two-State solution, enabling the State of Palestine to live in peace and security side by side with Israel.

But if the two-State solution were to be destroyed due to the creation of a one-State reality with two systems – Apartheid – from the unchecked imposition of this occupation that is rejected by our people and the international community, this would be a failure, and neither you, nor we, will have any other choice but to continue the struggle and demand full, equal rights for all inhabitants of historic Palestine. This is not a threat, but a warning of the realities and the consequences... as a result of ongoing Israeli policies that are gravely undermining the two-State solution. What do they want? Let them talk about other issues, but our choice remains the two-State solution

Our problem is with the Israeli colonial occupation and not with Judaism as a religion. Judaism for us Palestinians – Christians and Muslims – will never be considered a threat. It is an Abrahamic religion like Islam and Christianity. God Almighty says in the Quran: In the name of God the compassionate, the merciful *“we do not distinguish between his messengers”*. All messengers are equal: Mohammed, Jesus, and others. All these religions are equal and we are not distinguishing between prophets or messengers. And on this occasion we are congratulating the Jews on the occasion of the New Year, and we will also congratulate (...) And we would like to congratulate Muslims for the new Hijrah, starting tomorrow. So this is a demonstration of the approach between religions.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have dutifully upheld our responsibilities towards our people in the Gaza Strip in spite of the division since 2007. Since then, we have provided all forms of support on our own to our people in Gaza, who are gravely suffering from the cruel Israeli blockade. We have repeatedly affirmed that no one is more conscious of the interests of our people in Gaza Strip. We are keen to achieving the interests of our people in Gaza. We said that there would be no state in Gaza and there will be no Palestinian State without the Gaza Strip. A State in Gaza is a false dream. Our State will only be complete with the Gaza Strip.

Today, I must express my relief at the agreement reached in Cairo as a result of Egyptian efforts. We are thankful for these efforts aimed at nullifying the measures undertaken by Hamas following the division, including the formation of a government. Now the government has been cancelled and now there is commitment to the national unity or national consensus government to exercise its authority in Gaza Strip and to

allow for General Elections to be held. This agreement has been reached and we are satisfied with this agreement. And next week our government is going to the Gaza Strip to assume its responsibilities. We wish the government all success.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Also in my speech before this Assembly last year, I appealed to the British Government to rectify the grave injustice it inflicted upon the Palestinian people when it issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, promising Jews a national homeland in Palestine, despite the fact that Palestine was inhabited by the Palestinian people. 97% of the population at the time were Palestinians. We were disregarded. Palestine was among the most progressive and prosperous countries, and should not have been colonized or placed under the mandate of a great Power. Until this moment, the British Government has not taken any step to correct this historical injustice against our people. It should apologize and provide us with compensations and recognize the State of Palestine. We have spoken to them at length, and so far they have not responded and, even worse, they want to celebrate in November the centennial of this crime against us.

The silence of the international community with regard to Israel's aggressive policies has emboldened its pursuit of these policies. Let me remind you that Israel has violated international resolutions since its establishment. It has violated the United Nations Charter and continues to do so, as well as resolutions 181, 194, 242 (dividing Palestine), and it's said in article 42 that those who conduct aggression against the land of others will be defeated by force. Israel has taken a large part of our territory and it was not deterred by the UN. There is also resolution 194 providing for the return of refugees at that time. However, the UN has not adopted any resolution. And there is also another resolution calling for withdrawal. Resolution 338, and resolution 2334 of the Security Council last year. So where is this resolution? If the United Nations cannot implement resolutions, who will? Israel does not want to. Is Israel above the law? Ladies and gentlemen, there are double standards dealing with countries. This is your responsibility.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To save the peace process and the two-State solution, I urge this organization and your honourable States to do the following:

First: Actively pursue efforts to bring an end to the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine within a set timeframe. Within this timeframe the occupation will come to an end. It is no longer enough to issue generic, endless statements calling for an end to the occupation and the achievement of peace without a deadline. Efforts must be made to implement the Arab Peace Initiative, including a just solution for the Palestine refugee question in accordance with resolution 194. The Arab Peace Initiative was great in addressing the issue of refugees when it stated a just and agreed upon solution, not imposed upon a certain part, in accordance with resolution 194. Where is the mistake? But Israel rejects all resolutions. Israel has ridden roughshod over these resolutions. To whom should we go? To whom should we complain?

Second: Act to bring a halt to all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as demanded in numerous United Nations resolutions, including the most recent resolution 2334, in addition to the operative paragraphs of the 4th Geneva Convention. An occupying Power should not expel the people from their land. This is the text of the 4th Geneva Convention. Who is responsible for implementing these texts? Israel says no. What is the answer of the international community?

Third: Ensure international protection to the land and people of the State of Palestine, until the end of the occupation, as we are unable to provide protection to our people, given all the forces and the arms that we are facing every day. Who will protect us if you don't? Many a time we have tabled draft resolutions and these go in vain.

Fourth: Demand that Israel endorse and commit to the borders of 1967 as the basis for the two-State solution and set such borders in line with international resolutions. Once we delineate the borders, each party can act in its territory as it pleases without affecting the rights of the other party. Now Israel builds wherever it wishes, demolishing houses every day. Even schools are being demolished and hospitals and nobody raises an eyebrow.

Fifth: I must ask you, all the member States of the UN who have recognized Israel: they should state that they recognize Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders, thus aligning themselves with international resolutions and reaffirming their commitment to these resolutions. Even those who recognize Israel on the basis of 181 resolution. 181 was violated! Allow me to ask a question: Where are the borders of Israel that you are recognizing? Where are these borders? How can you recognize a State that has no borders? It has not even decided its own borders, and the international law states that the State is a land with borders, and Israel has no borders. How can you recognize a State that has no clear borders?

Sixth: I call on all States to end all forms of direct and indirect involvement with, and support to, the illegal Israeli colonial settlement regime in the land of the occupied State of Palestine, in accordance with UN resolutions and with the affirmed positions of States in this regard, and similar to the international community's approach towards the Apartheid regime in South Africa. We should not deal with settlement, we should not condone settlements. The black list of countries that are dealing illegally with Israeli settlements should be exposed and revealed.

Seventh: I urge those States that have not recognized the State of Palestine yet to do so. I don't understand how recognizing the State of Palestine on the borders of 1967 – there could be minor amendments between the two parties, but the foundation or the basis is 1967– So our borders are well known. Where are Israel's borders? I don't understand how recognizing the State of Palestine harms the chances of peace. Especially since we, Palestinians, have recognized Israel on the 1967 borders.

Eighth: We look to the Security Council to approve our application for full membership of the State of Palestine to the United Nations. What do we lack? We prove every day that we are eligible for such status. All those who support the two-State solution should recognize the two States, not one State; Palestine and Israel. If you recognize Israel, you should recognize Palestine.

Ninth: We urge the international community to continue providing economic and financial support to the Palestinian people to achieve self-reliance. Once occupation

ends, we will tell you 'Thank you, we will be self-reliant'. Unfortunately because there is occupation, we can only seek assistance, and we are grateful to you because you are rendering such assistance. Help us get rid of occupation and we will thank you for your help. We also urge you to continue providing support to UNRWA for the Palestine refugees in order to continue rendering humanitarian assistance. In this regard we are warning that there are attempts to eliminate item 7 on the agenda of the Human Rights Council or to change the mandate of UNRWA. And also there are efforts to obstruct the issuance of the list of companies operating in Israeli settlements. This is a black list. Why should we hide this list? It is similar to terrorism. Everybody should see this list to know who violates international law and who respects such law. So again the list of international the companies operating in Israeli settlements in the territory of the State of Palestine.

Tenth: We once again affirm our commitment to respect human rights and international conventions and to implement the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and all other treaties and conventions that we have acceded to. Anything that we have acceded to or adopted, we respect it, and we go side by side with the international community. We are part of it.

Mr. President,

The State of Palestine will reflect on these imperatives in draft resolutions, as appropriate, to be presented to the UN General Assembly. We call upon you to vote in favour of these resolutions with the clear aim of preserving the two-State solution and salvaging and promoting the chances for achieving peace, and to achieve prosperity for Palestinians and Israelis alike, and for the peoples of the region at large.

In conclusion, allow me ladies and gentlemen, to salute our great people who remain steadfast in their homeland, despite the suffering. Those who are struggling against foreign occupation peacefully. The culture of peace is prevailing among Palestinians. Who are those people who are joining Daesh or ISIL? None of them is from Palestine. What does this mean?

I salute our people in Jerusalem who have given one of the most brilliant examples of peaceful popular resistance against the Israeli colonial occupation. When they prevented them from praying, they prayed outside. They were praying and they were victorious.

I salute our people in exile and in the Diaspora.

I salute our people who remain steadfast in the West Bank and also in the besieged Gaza Strip.

I salute our glorious martyrs and our courageous prisoners who are in Israeli jails.

I tell them all that freedom is coming and is inevitable – it will come – and that occupation shall come to an end. It will either be the independence of the State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with the state of Israel on the 1967 borders, or equal rights for all of the inhabitants of the land of historic Palestine from the river to the sea. Will they accept that?

When South Africa was liberated from the Apartheid regime, Nelson Mandela said, 'I am grateful to the whole world and the United Nations that have contributed to and

supported the end of Apartheid in South Africa', and it so happened. But Nelson Mandela added, 'Our victory is incomplete until the victory is rendered to the Palestinian people'. So we are entrusted and you are entrusted to end Apartheid in Palestine, all of us, even the superpower should stand by us. This is a trust. You should fulfil the trust. Are you going to do so? Thank you, I hope so.

-On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the president of the State of Palestine for the statement just made. May I request representatives to remain seated while we greet the head of State.