

*Permanent Observer Mission  
of the State of Palestine  
to the United Nations*



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة  
لدولة فلسطين  
لدى الأمم المتحدة

*Statement by Ambassador Dr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, before the United Nations Security Council, Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestine Question, 15 January 2015: (Check against delivery)*

Mr. President,

On behalf of the State of Palestine, I congratulate the friendly country of Chile on its Presidency of the Security Council and wish you all success in steering the important agenda of work, confident in your able leadership. We also welcome H.E. Mr. Hernando Muñoz, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, and his chairing of this important debate. I also express our appreciation to the delegation of Chad for its honorable and capable stewardship of the Council in December.

Today, I also extend the warm congratulations of the State of Palestine to the new members of the Security Council - the friendly countries of Angola, Malaysia, New Zealand, Spain and Venezuela - as they assume their solemn responsibilities to uphold the Council's Charter duties, its resolutions and international law. We pledge to them, as to all the members of the Council, our full support and cooperation, and express confidence in their principled service on the Council.

Mr. President,

We return to the Security Council after its failure, once again, to uphold its duties vis-à-vis the Palestine question and to genuinely contribute to the efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and forge a credible path for peace. We regret that the Council as a whole was unable to rise to the occasion, even as the situation is acknowledged by all to be completely unsustainable and to constitute a threat to peace and security in the Middle East and globally.

The draft resolution that had been presented by Jordan, on behalf of the Arab Group, to the Security Council was, in substance, fully consistent with the demands made in past resolutions. Those resolutions continue to be flagrantly violated by Israel, the occupying Power, and the Council continues to allow this without consequence. While the draft resolution met with strong resistance, the reality is that the elements it contained are essential for achieving a just peace and have been unanimously supported by the international community for decades.

This includes, *inter alia*, the reaffirmation of parameters based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative; the calls for the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and for bringing an end to the occupation in all manifestations, including the illegal settlement enterprise, for achievement of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders; and the call for a just solution to the Palestine refugee question based on resolution 194 (III) and the Arab Peace Initiative. The draft also rightly set a deadline for an end to the Israeli occupation, an objective that cannot be logically rejected by anyone, and rightly called for an international conference as the start point and framework for any negotiations forward, recognizing the failure of the negotiations for more than 20 years and also the need for clear responsibilities of major stakeholders in shepherding this effort.

This initiative was intended to revitalize the international consensus and efforts for a just solution and to open doors for peace through such a new mechanism and clarity on the parameters of a peaceful solution and the end goals. Yet, it was illogically treated as a confrontational and irrational effort and regrettably obstructed.

Mr. President,

In spite of this setback, we will continue to approach the Security Council. We are determined in our pursuit of this peaceful, political, diplomatic and legal path towards the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their legitimate national aspirations and the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive peace. These goals are shared by the international community, and this principal organ of the United Nations should not be absolved of its responsibilities in this regard.

How could we cease our appeals to the Security Council as long as the Israeli occupation of our land, and the endless crises and human suffering it causes, continue? How could we cease our calls for international support and action while our people continue to be denied their freedom and liberty, continue to be brutally oppressed, and this historic injustice persists?

As we sit in this Council chamber, the situation deteriorates, becoming more fragile and volatile by the day, while a peaceful solution remains elusive due to lack of political will and the intransigence of Israel, which carries on with blatant impunity with zero accountability.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, tensions are raging as Israeli violations and crimes push the situation to a precipice. Every day we are witness to Israel's rabid settlement colonization altering the City's demography and character and further surrounding and isolating it; heavy-handed raids and repression of the Palestinian civilian population; vicious "price tag" attacks by Israeli settlers, who continue to harass and assault Palestinians and seize Palestinian homes, with full backing of the Government; and ongoing provocations and incitement by Israeli politicians and religious leaders, along with other Jewish extremists, who continue to raid and defile holy sites, including Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound, and to attack worshippers and other civilians in violent rampages of hatred, discrimination and superiority. The rising fury and despair in Occupied East Jerusalem is an extremely toxic situation that could erupt at any moment, including in the form of religious conflict.

In the rest of the West Bank, Israel also continues its illegal settlement activities – doing the exact opposite of what required for ending this insidious occupation. Constructing settlements, expropriating land, building the wall, demolishing homes, and displacing civilians, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and in flagrant contempt of the global demands to stop this illegal campaign, Israel has totally undermined the two-State solution for peace. Settlers also continue to terrorize and torment Palestinian civilians and to wreak havoc and destruction. Military raids and arrests and detentions continue, day and night, with more than 6,800 Palestinians, including children, women and elected officials, now imprisoned by Israel under dire conditions. For all of these grave crimes breaches, Israel has yet to be held to account.

In the Gaza Strip, the humanitarian disaster willfully and wantonly inflicted by Israel, the occupying Power, last summer is worsening beyond comprehension. The illegal Israeli blockade, delays in reconstruction, a fuel and water crisis, and fierce winter storms are compounding the unimaginable suffering of the Palestinian civilian population and further exposing the lasting impact of the crimes perpetrated by the Israeli occupying forces. Massive flooding has further displaced

civilians, in addition to the 110,000 people displaced following Israel's destruction of their homes and neighborhoods. In the bitter cold, families continue to shelter in UNRWA schools, in makeshift homes, and even in the ruins and rubble of what remains of their homes, struggling to survive with minimal food, water, sanitation and other human necessities.

Despite the obstruction and collective punishment of Israel's blockade, the Palestinian National Consensus Government, under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, continues its efforts to advance reconstruction and tend to the needs of our people in Gaza. However, it must be recognized that the massive scope and scale of this disaster, on both the human and the physical level, would present a formidable challenge to even the strongest and most capable government.

We call on the international community to demand that Israel immediately end its blockade of the Gaza Strip and allow for unimpeded humanitarian access, movement of persons into and out of Gaza, entry of all necessary supplies, including construction materials, and exports, and to honor pledges to support reconstruction. Without this, it will be next to impossible to address urgent humanitarian needs, rebuild Gaza, ease the isolation and trauma of our people there, and revive any semblance of an economy.

Mr. President,

In addition to this brutalization and collective punishment of our people and colonization of our land, Israel, the occupying Power, is also again withholding Palestinian tax revenues, in a blatant act of reprisal and theft of Palestinian funds. This kind of retribution has been condemned by the international community before and it should be once again. Israel must be demanded to release our tax revenues, which are vital for the functioning of government institutions, including in education, health, security, sanitation and social welfare services. Such vulgar, illegal behavior by Israel should not be tolerated or excused, for it can only encourage its contempt for the law and impunity.

In this regard, it must be clearly stated: the recent accessions by the State of Palestine to international conventions and treaties, including to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), are legal, peaceful steps that should be welcomed by the international community. There should be no doubt about Palestine's commitment to international law and peace, and for this proven commitment, Palestine should not be punished. This is wrong and totally perverse and cannot be condoned by any rational, law-abiding and peaceful person or country.

Here, we are compelled to remind the international community: there is no symmetry or balance in this conflict. There is an occupier – imposing and entrenching a nearly-half century long military occupation in the most vicious, lethal and destructive ways – and there is an occupied people - seeking their liberty, rights and justice through peaceful, political and legal means despite the oppression and crimes they have been mercilessly subjected to for decades.

It defies logic, and of course the law, to excuse and absolve the violator – Israel, the occupying Power – of any culpability, and to instead threaten and punish those – the Palestinian people – merely seeking their human rights, foremost their right to be free and independent.

We thus express appreciation for the statements issued by governments, inter-governmental organizations and human rights groups in support of Palestine's accessions and against Israeli reprisals. We are also grateful for the principled statement, on 7 January, by the President of the

Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute, Minister Sidiki Kaba, who welcomed the deposit by the State of Palestine of the instruments of accession to the Rome Statute, and stressed that *"Each ratification of the Rome Statute constitutes welcome progress towards its universality. I call on all members of the United Nations to join this permanent and independent system of international justice to fight against impunity and prevent the most serious crimes under international law"*.  
Mr. President,

While recognizing the many serious threats and problems in our world, we must conclude by asking: how can the international community allow the Security Council to remain paralyzed, while the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues to burn, inflaming tensions and further destabilizing the situation in an already-volatile region? How long can the international community stand aside while this injustice continues and the Palestinian people continue to be denied their rights and freedoms – the same rights and freedoms so staunchly defended everywhere else around the world?

We can no longer wait. After nearly seven decades of *Al-Nakba* and nearly five decades of occupation, we can no longer accept to be told to wait for the fulfillment of our rights. The Palestinian people and leadership have been more than patient, more than reasonable and more than steadfast. History will clearly attest to this resolve in the face of such grave injustice.

Nor can we accept any longer to be told to wait to seek accountability for Israel's violations against our people. This is based on our firm conviction that accountability and compelling respect for the law are crucial for deterring further crimes against our people, making the Israeli occupation too costly, and hastening an end to this tragic conflict and the realization of justice and peace.

Mr. President,

The focus now must be on implementation of the law and ensuring responsibility for the gross human rights violations, breaches of humanitarian law, and war crimes that have been perpetrated and not punitive measures to exact retribution for a commitment to international law. The focus must be on ending this illegitimate, belligerent, colonial Israeli occupation in all its manifestations and realizing the international consensus for a peaceful solution.

We will thus continue to reject all of the irrational arguments against our peaceful, non-violent, political, diplomatic and legal endeavors and will continue on this path for justice and peace.

At the same time, we will persist in our appeals to all peace-loving countries and peoples to continue their principled solidarity and support in this effort to uphold international law and to realize the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to achieve just solutions for all core issues, including the plight of the Palestine refugees, based on the relevant resolutions and international law.

Despite the recent setback in this Council, we are hopeful and confident that this global support and solidarity, as well as the needed political and moral responsibility, will be forthcoming, extending the spirit and momentum of the *International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People*, towards the attainment of the just, lasting and comprehensive peace we have so long been seeking.

I thank you, Mr. President.