

Speech by H.E Abdelaziz Abuqutaish Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Malaysia on Sunday 29th July 2007

Assalamualaikum, and good morning

In the beginning please allow me to express our thanks and deep appreciation to the organizers of this important event and to extend our compliments and gratitude to our brothers and sisters in Malaysia for their understanding and support of our National Just cause.

We feel it's our duty to convey to you the positions, observations and concerns of the Palestinian people on the current events in Palestine.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian Territory remains grave, with the humanitarian, economic, social, political, and security situation deteriorating on all fronts.

In June this year, the Palestinian people solemnly marked the 40th anniversary of Israel's military occupation of the Palestinian Territory. Tragically, the Palestinian people remain a stateless, dispossessed and oppressed people. Our People continue to suffer mounting hardships in their ongoing struggle to realize their inalienable human rights, including the right to self-determination.

While the peace process remains stalled despite efforts exerted to revive it, Israel has exploited the passage of time, and the inaction of the international community for the continued execution of its illegal policies and actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The result has been continued Israeli violation of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people.

Additionally, Israel continues its brutal military campaign against the Palestinian civilian population. The Israeli occupying forces have killed and injured hundreds more Palestinian civilians in frequent and savage military attacks inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Israeli government continues its wanton destruction of Palestinian culture and infrastructure including but not limited to, religious and historical properties and national institutions. Israel continues to unlawfully detain and imprison more than 11 thousand civilian Palestinians and has persisted on carrying out daily arrest campaigns.

Similarly, Israel has continued to pursue its illegal colonization campaign via the construction of illegal settlements, the Wall, the bypass roads and the imposition of humiliating checkpoints throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Currently, there are 161 fully-fledged Israeli settlements, and at least 96 illegal out posts in the Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem. These settlements are occupied by more than 450 thousand Israel settlers; the majority of which are armed. It is worthy to mention that these Israeli actions contravene with the road map peace initiative and all United Nations resolutions.

Settlement Construction in and around Occupied East Jerusalem has been especially intense with Israel declaring its intention to totally isolate the city and its Palestinian inhabitants from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and furthering the judaization of the city.

Israeli forces impose pro-longed closures of cross points, and severe restrictions on the movement of Palestinian persons and goods. In terms of closures, the Gaza Strip has been impacted mostly in violation of the agreement of movements and access of 2005. The Rafah crossing for people, and the Karni crossing for goods are frequently closed. Currently, both crossings have been closed indefinitely by Israel. The inhuman Israeli actions have left more than 6000 Palestinians stranded on the Egyptian side of Rafah under severe sub-humanitarian conditions.

As the crisis on the ground continues, primarily as result of Israel illegal policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, the current situation remains dire and the prospects for achieving a peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine seem more remote.

Here, we see that the international community must uphold its responsibilities, vis-a-vis international law, and UN Resolutions. Practical measures must be taken to ensure respect for the law and the implementation of U.N resolutions, and to finally hold Israel accountable for its actions. In doing so, the international community would bring an end to Israel's impunity and compel it to comply with its legal obligations.

The Palestinian people have reached a point of crisis in their national struggle. This crisis is characterized by confusion between the occupation and internal divisions threatening the unity of their land and people both in Palestine and the Diaspora.

Unfortunately, this was caused by the ill-fated military coup in Gaza by Hamas which threw the Palestinian situation into danger and has diverted the energy and attention away from the national struggle. Palestinians have reacted to this military coup with grief, pain, and bitterness and rejected the outcome of the imposed military solution, as it represents a serious and grave move away from the democratic process. It must be remembered the most important factor in this struggle remains the Palestinian people and the nation, not the fighting over factional interests. We are seeking democracy over factional rule and interest.

For national unity of the Palestinians to be re-established, there is a need to return to the decision of the Palestinian people who are the source of all authorities. To achieve these objectives, new presidential and legislative elections on the basis of proportional representation must be held in order to ensure a democratic exit from the current crisis.

In closing we would like to confirm that opportunities for pursuing peace are still before us and must be seized. The Palestinian Leadership is committed to achieving a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the conflict and has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to the peace process on its agreed basis, to the agreements concluded between the two sides, to the Road Map & to the Arab Peace Initiative.

Thank you.