

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

YASSER ARAFAT

**THE RIGHT
TO RESIST**

*(Two Speeches to the United Nations
General Assembly)*

Publisher's Note

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SPEECH TO THE UN ON NOVEMBER 13, 1974

Before the 29th session of the United Nations General Assembly

In the name of the people of Palestine and the leader of its national struggle, the Palestine Liberation Organization, I take this opportunity to extend to you, Mr. President, my warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of the 29th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We have, of course, long known you to be a sincere and devoted defender of the cause of freedom, justice and peace. We have known you also to be in the vanguard of the freedom-fighters in their heroic Algerian war of national liberation. Today Algeria has attained a distinguished position in the world community and has assumed its responsibilities both in the national and international fields, thus earning the support and esteem of the entire human family.

I also avail myself of this opportunity to extend my sincerest appreciation to Mr. Kurt Waldheim, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the great efforts he has made and is still making to enable us to assume our responsibilities in the smoothest possible way.

In the name of the people of Palestine I take this opportunity to congratulate three states that have recently been admitted to membership in the United Nations after obtaining their national independence: Guinea-Bissau, Bangladesh and Grenada. I extend our best wishes to the leadership of those member states and wish them progress and success.

Mr. President, I thank you for having invited the Palestinian Liberation Organization to participate in this plenary session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am grateful to all those representatives of states of the United Nations who contributed to the decision to introduce the question of Palestine as a separate item of the agenda of this Assembly. That decision made possible the Assembly's resolution inviting us to address it on the question of Palestine.

This is a very important occasion. The question of Palestine is being re-examined by the United Nations and we consider that step to be as much a victory for the world organization as it is for the cause of our people. It indicates anew that the United Nations of today is not the United Nations of the past, just as today's world is not yesterday's world. Today's United Nations represents 138 nations, a number that more clearly reflects the will of the

international community. Thus today's United Nations is more nearly capable of implementing the principles embodied in its Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as being more truly empowered to support causes of peace and justice.

Our peoples are now beginning to feel that change. Along with them, the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America also feel the change. As a result, the United Nations acquires greater esteem both in our people's view and in the view of other peoples. Our hope is thereby strengthened that the United Nations can contribute actively to the pursuit and triumph of the cause of peace, justice, freedom and independence. Our resolve to build a new world is fortified — a world free of colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and racism in all its instances, including Zionism.

Our world aspires to peace, justice, equality and freedom. It wishes that oppressed nations at present bent under the weight of imperialism might gain their freedom and their right to self-determination. It hopes to place the relations between nations on a basis of equality, peaceful co-existence, mutual respect for each other's internal affairs, secure national sovereignty, independence and territorial unity

on the basis of justice and mutual benefit. This world resolves that the economic ties binding it together should be grounded in justice, parity and mutual interest. It aspires finally to direct its human resources against the scourge of poverty, famine, disease and natural calamity, toward the development of productive scientific and technical capabilities to enhance human wealth — all this in the hope of reducing the disparity between the developing and the developed countries. But all such aspirations cannot be realized in a world that is at present ruled over by tension, injustice, oppression, racial discrimination and exploitation, a world also threatened with unending economic disaster, war and crisis.

Great numbers of peoples, including those of Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and Palestine, among many others, are still victims of oppression and violence. Their areas of the world are gripped by armed struggles provoked by imperialism and racial discrimination, both merely forms of aggression and terror. Those are instances of oppressed peoples compelled by intolerable circumstances into a confrontation with such oppression. But wherever that confrontation occurs it is legitimate and just.

It is imperative that the international community should support these peoples in their struggles, in the furtherance of their rightful causes, in the attainment of their right to self-determination.

In Indochina the peoples are still exposed to aggression. They remain subjected to conspiracies preventing them from the enjoyment of peace and the realization of their goals. Although peoples everywhere have welcomed the agreements on peace reached in Laos and South Vietnam, no one can say that genuine peace has been achieved, nor that those forces responsible in the first place for aggression have now desisted from their attacks on Vietnam. The same can be said of the present military aggression against the people of Cambodia. It is therefore incumbent on the international community to support these oppressed peoples, and also to condemn the oppressors for their designs against peace. Moreover, despite the positive stand taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with regard to a peaceful, just solution of the Korean question, there is as yet no settlement of that question.

A few months ago the problem of Cyprus erupted violently before us. All peoples everywhere shared in the suffering of the Cypriots. We ask that the United

Nations continue its efforts to reach a just solution in Cyprus, thereby sparing the Cypriots further war and ensuring peace and independence for them instead. Undoubtedly, however, consideration of the question of Cyprus belongs within that of Middle Eastern problems as well as of Mediterranean problems.

In their efforts to replace an outmoded but still dominant world economic system with a new, more logically rational one, the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America must nevertheless face implacable attacks on these efforts. These countries have expressed their views at the special session of the General Assembly on raw materials and development. Thus the plundering, the exploitation, the siphoning off of the wealth of impoverished peoples must be terminated forthwith. There must be no deterring of these peoples' efforts to develop and control their wealth. Furthermore, there is a grave necessity for arriving at fair prices for raw materials from these countries.

In addition, these countries continue to be hampered in the attainment of their primary objectives formulated at the Conference on the Law of the Sea in Caracas, at the Population Conference and at the Rome Food Conference. The United Nations should therefore bend

every effort to achieve a radical alteration of the world economic system, making it possible for developing countries to develop. The United Nations must shoulder the responsibility for fighting inflation, now borne most heavily by the developing countries, especially the oil-producing countries. The United Nations must firmly condemn any threats made against these countries simply because they demand their just rights.

The worldwide armaments race shows no sign of abating. As a consequence, the entire world is threatened with the dispersion of its wealth and the utter waste of its energies. Armed violence is made more likely everywhere. We expect the United Nations to devote itself single-mindedly to curbing the unlimited acquisition of arms; to preventing even the possibility of nuclear destruction; to reducing the vast sums spent on military technology; to converting expenditure on war into projects for development, for increasing production and for benefiting common humanity.

And still, the highest tension exists in our part of the world. There the Zionist entity clings tenaciously to occupied Arab territory; Zionism persists in its aggressions against us and our territory. New military preparations are feverishly being made. These anticipate another, fifth

war of aggression to be launched against us. Such signs bear the closest possible watching, since there is a grave likelihood that this war would forebode nuclear destruction and cataclysmic annihilation.

The world is in need of tremendous efforts if its aspirations to peace, freedom, justice, equality and development are to be realized, if its struggle is to be victorious over colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and racism in all its forms, including Zionism. Only by such efforts can actual form be given to the aspirations of all peoples whose states oppose such efforts. It is this road that leads to the fulfilment of those principles emphasized by the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Were the *status quo* simply to be maintained, however, the world would instead be exposed to prolonged armed conflict, in addition to economic, human and natural calamity.

Despite abiding world crisis, despite even the gloomy powers of backwardness and disastrous wrong, we live in a time of glorious change. An old world order is crumbling before our eyes, as imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and racism, the chief form of which is Zionism, ineluctably perish. We are privileged to be able to witness a great wave of history

bearing peoples forward into a new world which they have created. In that world just causes will triumph. Of that we are confident.

The question of Palestine belongs to this perspective of emergence and struggle. Palestine is crucial amongst those just causes fought for unstintingly by masses labouring under imperialism and aggression. It cannot be, and is not, lost on me today, as I stand here before the General Assembly, that if I have been given the opportunity to address the General Assembly, so too must the opportunity be given to all liberation movements fighting against racism and imperialism. In their names, in the name of every human being struggling for freedom and self-determination, I call upon the General Assembly urgently to give their just causes the same full attention the General Assembly has so rightly given to our cause. Such recognitions once made, there will be a secure foundation thereafter for the preservation of universal peace. For only with such peace will a new world order endure in which peoples can live free of oppression, fear, terror and the suppression of their rights. As I said earlier, this is the true perspective in which to set the question of Palestine. I shall now do so for the General Assembly, keeping firmly in mind both

the perspective and the goal of a coming world order.

Even as today we address the General Assembly from what is before all else an international rostrum, we are also expressing our faith in political and diplomatic struggle as complements, as enhancements of armed struggle. Furthermore, we express our appreciation of the role the United Nations is capable of playing in settling problems of international scope. But this capability, I said a moment ago, became real only once the United Nations had accommodated itself to the living actuality of aspiring peoples, towards which an organization of so truly international a dimension owes unique obligations.

In addressing the General Assembly today our people proclaims its faith in the future, unencumbered either by past tragedies or present limitations. If, as we discuss the present, we enlist the past in our service, we do so only to light up our journey into the future alongside other movements of national liberation. If we return now to the historical roots of our cause we do so because at this very moment in our midst are those, who, while they occupy our homes, as their cattle graze in our pastures, and as their hands pluck the fruit of our trees, claim at the same time that we are disembodied spirits, fictions without

presence, without traditions or future. We speak of our roots also because until recently some people have regarded — and continued to regard — our problem as merely a problem of refugees. They have portrayed the Middle East Question as little more than a border dispute between the Arab states and the Zionist entity. They have imagined that our people lays claims on rights not rightfully its own and fights neither with logic nor valid motive, with a simple wish only to disturb the peace and to terrorize wantonly. For there are amongst you — and here I refer to the United States of America and others like it — those who supply our enemy freely with planes and bombs and with every variety of murderous weapon. They take hostile positions against us, deliberately distorting the true essence of the problem. All this is done not only at our expense, but at the expense of the American people, and of the friendship we continue to hope can be cemented between us and this great people, whose history of struggle for the sake of freedom we honour and salute.

I cannot now forget this opportunity to appeal from this rostrum directly to the American people, asking it to give its support to our heroic and fighting people. I ask it wholeheartedly to endorse right

and justice, to recall George Washington to mind — heroic Washington whose purpose was his nation's freedom and independence, Abraham Lincoln, champion of the destitute and the wretched, and also Woodrow Wilson whose doctrine of Fourteen Points remains subscribed to and venerated by our people. I ask the American people whether the demonstrations of hostility and enmity taking place outside this great hall reflect true intent of America's will? What, I ask you plainly, is the crime of the people of Palestine against the American people? Why do you fight us so? Does such unwarranted belligerence really serve your interests? Does it serve the interests of the American masses? No, definitely not. I can only hope that the American people will remember that their friendship with the whole Arab nation is too great, too abiding and too rewarding for any such demonstrations to harm it.

In any event, as our discussion of the question of Palestine focusses upon historical roots, we do so because we believe that any question now exercising the world's concern must be viewed radically, in the true root sense of that word, if a real solution is ever to be grasped. We propose this radical approach as an antidote to an approach to international issues that obscures historical origins behind ignor-

ance, denial and slavish obeisance to the present.

The roots of the Palestinian question reach back into the closing years of the 19th century, in other words, to that period which we call the era of colonialism and settlement as we know it today. This is precisely the period during which Zionism as a scheme was born; its aim was the conquest of Palestine by European immigrants, just as settlers colonized, and indeed raided, most of Africa. This is the period during which, pouring forth out of the west, colonialism spread into the furthest reaches of Africa, Asia and Latin America, building colonies everywhere, cruelly exploiting, oppressing, plundering the peoples of those three continents. This period persists into the present. Marked evidence of its totally reprehensible presence can be readily perceived in the racism practised both in South Africa and in Palestine.

Just as colonialism and its demagogues dignified their conquests, their plunder and limitless attacks upon the natives of Africa with appeals to a “civilizing and modernizing” mission, so too did waves of Zionist immigrants disguise their purposes as they conquered Palestine. Just as colonialism as a system and colonialists as its instrument used religion, colour,

race and language to justify the African's exploitation and his cruel subjugation by terror and discrimination, so too were these methods employed as Palestine was usurped and its people hounded from their national homeland.

Just as colonialism heedlessly used the wretched, the poor, the exploited as mere matter with which to build and carry out settler-colonialism, so too were destitute, oppressed European Jews employed on behalf of world imperialism and the Zionist leadership. European Jews were transformed into the instruments of aggression; they became the elements of settler-colonialism intimately allied to racial discrimination.

Zionist theology was utilized against our Palestinian people: the purpose was not only the establishment of Western-style settler-colonialism but also the severing of Jews from their various homelands and subsequently their estrangement from their nations. Zionism is an ideology that is imperialist, colonialist, racist; it is profoundly reactionary and discriminatory; it is united with anti-Semitism in its retrograde tenets and is, when all is said and done, another side of the same base coin. For when what is proposed is that adherents of the Jewish faith, regardless of their national residence, should neither

owe allegiance to their national residence nor live on equal footing with its other, non-Jewish citizens — when that is proposed we hear anti-Semitism being proposed. When it is proposed that the only solution for the Jewish problem is that Jews must alienate themselves from communities of nations of which they have been an historical part, when it is proposed that Jews solve the Jewish problem by immigrating to and forcibly settling the land of another people — when this occurs, exactly the same position is being advocated as the one urged by anti-Semites against Jews.

Thus, for instance, we can understand the close connection between Rhodes, who promoted settler-colonialism in southeast Africa, and Herzl, who had settler-colonialist designs upon Palestine. Having received a certificate of good settler-colonialist conduct from Rhodes, Herzl then turned around and presented this certificate to the British Government, hoping thus to secure a formal resolution supporting Zionist policy. In exchange, the Zionists promised Britain an imperialist base on Palestinian soil so that imperial interests could be safeguarded at one of their chief strategic points.

So the Zionist movement allied itself directly with world colonialism in a com-

mon raid on our land. Allow me now to present a selection of historical truths about this alliance.

The Jewish invasion of Palestine began in 1881. Before the first large wave of immigrants started arriving, Palestine had a population of half a million; most of the population was either Muslim or Christian, and only 20,000 were Jewish. Every segment of the population enjoyed the religious tolerance characteristic of our civilization.

Palestine was then a verdant land, inhabited mainly by an Arab people in the course of building its life and dynamically enriching its indigenous culture.

Between 1882 and 1917, the Zionist movement settled approximately 50,000 European Jews in our homeland. To that it resorted to trickery and deceit in order to implant them in our midst. Its success in getting Britain to issue the Balfour Declaration once again demonstrated the alliance between Zionism and imperialism. Furthermore, by promising to the Zionist movement what was not hers to give, Britain showed how oppressive the rule of imperialism was. As it was constituted then, the League of Nations abandoned our Arab people, and Wilson's pledges and promises came to nought. In the guise of a mandate, British imperialism was cruelly

and directly imposed upon us. The mandate document issued by the League of Nations was to enable the Zionist invaders to consolidate their gains in our homeland.

In the wake of the Balfour Declaration and over a period of 30 years, the Zionist movement succeeded, in collaboration with its imperialist ally, in settling more European Jews on the land, thus usurping the properties of Palestinian Arabs.

By 1947, the number of Jews had reached 600,000; they owned about 6 per cent of Palestinian arable land. The figure should be compared with the Arab population of Palestine, which at that time was 1,250,000.

As a result of the collusion between the mandatory power and the Zionist movement and with the support of some countries, this General Assembly early in its history approved a recommendation to partition our Palestinian homeland. This took place in an atmosphere poisoned with questionable actions and strong pressure. The General Assembly partitioned what it had no right to divide — an indivisible homeland. When we rejected that decision, our position corresponded to that of the natural mother who refused to permit King Solomon to cut her son in two when the unnatural mother claimed the child

for herself and agreed to his dismemberment. Furthermore, even though the partition resolution granted the colonialist settlers 54% of the land of Palestine, their dissatisfaction with the decision prompted them to wage a war of terror against the civilian Arab population. They occupied 81 per cent of the total area of Palestine, uprooting a million Arabs. Thus, they occupied 524 Arab towns and villages, of which they destroyed 385, completely obliterating them in the process. Having done so, they built their own settlements and colonies on the ruins of our farms and groves. The roots of the Palestine question lie here. Its causes do not stem from any conflicts between two religions or two nationalisms. Neither is it a border conflict between neighbouring states. It is the cause of people deprived of its homeland, dispersed and uprooted, and living mostly in exile and in refugee camps.

With support from imperialist and colonialist powers, it managed to get itself accepted as a United Nations Member. It further succeeded in getting the Palestine Question deleted from the agenda of the United Nations and in deceiving world public opinion by presenting our cause as a problem of refugees in need either of charity from do-gooders, or settlement in a land not theirs.

Not satisfied with all this, the racist entity, founded on the imperialist-colonialist concept, turned itself into a base of imperialism and into an arsenal of weapons. This enabled it to assume its role of subjugating the Arab people and of committing aggression against them, in order to satisfy its ambitions for further expansion on Palestinian and other Arab lands. In addition to the many instances of aggression committed by this entity against the Arab states, it has launched two large-scale wars in 1956 and 1967, thus endangering world peace and security.

As a result of Zionist aggression in June 1967, the enemy occupied Egyptian Sinai as far as the Suez Canal. The enemy occupied Syria's Golan Heights, in addition to all Palestinian land west of the Jordan. All these developments have led to the creation in our area of what has come to be known as the "Middle East problem." The situation has been rendered more seriously by the enemy's persistence in maintaining its unlawful occupation and in further consolidating it, thus establishing a beachhead for world imperialism's thrust against our Arab nation. All Security Council decisions and appeals to world public opinion for withdrawal from the lands occupied in June 1967 have been ignored. Despite all the peaceful efforts

on the international level, the enemy has not been deterred from its expansionist policy. The only alternative open before our Arab nations, chiefly Egypt and Syria, was to expend exhaustive efforts in preparing forcefully to resist that barbarous armed invasion — and this in order to liberate Arab lands and to restore the rights of the Palestinian people, after all other peaceful means had failed.

Under these circumstances, the fourth war broke out in October 1973, bringing home to the Zionist enemy the bankruptcy of its policy of occupation, expansion and its reliance on the concept of military might. Despite all this, the leaders of the Zionist entity are far from having learned any lesson from their experience. They are making preparations for the fifth war, resorting once more to the language of military superiority, aggression, terrorism, subjugation and finally, always to war in their dealings with the Arabs.

It pains our people greatly to witness the propagation of the myth that its homeland was a desert until it was made to bloom by the toil of foreign settlers, that it was a land without a people, and that the colonialist entity caused no harm to any human being. No, such lies must be exposed from this rostrum, for the world must know that Palestine was the cradle

of the most ancient cultures and civilizations. Its Arab people were engaged in farming and building, spreading culture throughout the land for thousands of years, setting an example in the practice of freedom of worship, acting faithful guardians of the holy places of all religions. As a son of Jerusalem, I treasure for myself and my people beautiful memories and vivid images of the religious brotherhood that was the hallmark of our Holy City before it succumbed to catastrophe. Our people continued to pursue this enlightened policy until the establishment of the State of Israel and their dispersion. This did not deter our people from pursuing their humanitarian role on Palestinian soil. Nor will they permit their land to become a launching pad for aggression or a racist camp predicated on the destruction of civilization, cultures, progress and peace. Our people cannot but maintain the heritage of their ancestors in resisting the invaders, in assuming the privileged task of defending their native land, their Arab nationhood, their culture and civilization, and in safeguarding the cradle of monotheistic religion.

By contrast, we need only mention briefly some Israeli stands: its support of the Secret Organization in Algeria, its bolstering of the settler-colonialists

in Africa — whether in the Congo, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Azania or South Africa — and its backing of South Vietnam against the Vietnamese revolution. In addition, one can mention Israel's continuing support of imperialists and racists everywhere, its obstructionist stand in the Committee of Twenty-Four, its refusal to cast its vote in support of independence for the African states, and its opposition to the demands of many Asian, African and Latin American nations, and several other states in the Conferences on raw materials, population, the Law of the Sea and food. All these facts offer further proof of the character of the enemy which has usurped our land. They justify the honourable struggle which we are waging against it. As we defend a vision of the future, our enemy upholds the myths of the past.

The enemy we face has a long record of hostility even towards the Jews themselves, for there is within the Zionist entity a built-in racism against Oriental Jews. While we were vociferously condemning the massacres of Jews under nazi rule, Zionist leadership appeared more interested at that time in exploiting them as best it could in order to realize its goal of immigration into Palestine.

If the immigration of Jews to Palestine

had had as its objective the goal of enabling them to live side by side with us, enjoying the same rights and assuming the same duties, we would have opened our doors to them, as far as our homeland's capacity for absorption permitted. Such was the case with the thousands of Armenians and Circassians who still live among us in equality as brethren and citizens. But that the goal of this immigration should be to usurp our homeland, disperse our people and turn us into second-class citizens — this is what no one can conceivably demand that we acquiesce in or submit to. Therefore, since its inception, our revolution has not been motivated by racial or religious factors. Its target has never been the Jew, as a person, but racist Zionism and undisguised aggression. In this sense, ours is also a revolution for the Jew, as a human being, as well. We are struggling so that Jews, Christians and Muslims may live in equality, enjoying the same rights and assuming the same duties, free from racial or religious discrimination.

We do distinguish between Judaism and Zionism. While we maintain our opposition to the colonialist Zionist movement, we respect the Jewish faith. Today, almost one century after the rise of the Zionist movement, we wish to warn of its increasing danger to the Jews of the

world, to our Arab people and to world peace and security. For Zionism encourages the Jew to emigrate out of his homeland and grants him an artificially-created nationality. The Zionists proceed with their terrorist activities even though these have proved ineffective. The phenomenon of constant emigration from Israel, which is bound to grow as the bastions of colonialism and racism in the world fall, is an example of the inevitability of the failure of such activities.

We urge the people and governments of the world to stand firm against Zionist attempts at encouraging world Jewry to emigrate from their countries and to usurp our land. We urge them as well firmly to oppose any discrimination against any human being, as to religion, race or colour.

Why should our Arab Palestinian people pay the price of such discrimination in the world? Why should our people be responsible for the problems of Jewish immigration, if such problems exist in the minds of some people? Why do not the supporters of these problems open their own countries, which can absorb and help these immigrants?

Those who call us terrorists wish to prevent world public opinion from discovering the truth about us and from seeing the justice on our faces. They seek to hide

the terrorism and tyranny of their acts, and our own posture of self-defence.

The difference between the revolutionary and the terrorist lies in the reason for which each fights. For whoever stands by a just cause and fights for the freedom and liberation of his land from the invaders, the settlers and the colonialists, cannot possibly be called terrorist, otherwise the American people in their struggle for liberation from the British colonialists would have been terrorists, the European resistance against the nazis would be terrorism, the struggle of the Asian, African and Latin American peoples would also be terrorism, and many of you who are in this Assembly hall were considered terrorists. This is actually a just and proper struggle consecrated by the United Nations Charter and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As to those who fight against the just causes, those who wage war to occupy, colonize and oppress other people — those are the terrorists, those are the people whose actions should be condemned, who should be called war criminals: for the justice of the cause determines the right to struggle.

Zionist terrorism which was waged against the Palestinian people to evict it from its country and usurp its land is registered in our official documents. Thou-

sands of our people were assassinated in their villages and towns, tens of thousands of others were forced at gunpoint to leave their homes and the lands of their fathers. Time and time again our children, women and aged were evicted and had to wander in the deserts and climb mountains without any food or water. No one who in 1948 witnessed the catastrophe that befell the inhabitants of hundreds of villages and towns — in Jaffa, Lydda, Ramie and Galilee — no one who has been a witness to that catastrophe will ever forget the experience, even though the mass blackout has succeeded in hiding these horrors as it has hidden the traces of 385 Palestinian villages and towns destroyed at the time and erased from the map. The destruction of 19,000 houses during the past seven years, which is equivalent to the complete destruction of 200 more Palestinian villages, and the great number of maimed as a result of the treatment they were subjected to in Israeli prisons, cannot be hidden by any blackout.

Their terrorism fed on hatred and this hatred was even directed against the olive tree in my country, which has been a proud symbol and which reminded them of the indigenous inhabitants of the land, a living reminder that the land is Palestinian. Thus they sought to destroy it. How

can one describe the statement by Golda Meir which expressed her disquiet about “the Palestinian children born every day”? They see in the Palestinian child, in the Palestinian tree, an enemy that should be exterminated. For tens of years Zionists have been harassing our people’s cultural, political, social and artistic leaders, terrorizing them and assassinating them. They have stolen our cultural heritage, our popular folklore and have claimed it as theirs. Their terrorism even reached our sacred places in our beloved and peaceful Jerusalem. They have endeavoured to de-Arabize it and make it lose its Muslim and Christian character by evicting its inhabitants and annexing it.

I must mention the fire of the Aksa Mosque and disfiguration of many of the monuments, which are both historic and religious in character. Jerusalem, with its religious history and its spiritual values, bears witness to the future. It is proof of our eternal presence, of our civilization, of our human values. It is therefore not surprising that under its skies the three religions were born and that under that sky these three religions shine in order to enlighten mankind so that it might express the tribulations and hopes of humanity, and that it might mark out the road of the future with its hopes.

The small number of Palestinian Arabs who were not uprooted by the Zionists in 1948 are at present refugees in their own homeland. Israeli law treats them as second-class citizens — and even as third-class citizens since Oriental Jews are second-class citizens — and they have been subject to all forms of racial discrimination and terrorism after confiscation of their land and property. They have been victims of bloody massacres such as that of Kfar Kassim; they have been expelled from their villages and denied the right to return, as in the case of the inhabitants of Ikrit and Kfar-Birim. For 26 years, our population has been living under martial law and has been denied freedom of movement without prior permission from the Israeli military governor — this at a time when an Israeli law was promulgated granting citizenship to any Jew anywhere who wanted to emigrate to our homeland. Moreover, another Israeli law stipulated that Palestinians who were not present in their villages or towns at the time of the occupation were not entitled to Israeli citizenship.

The record of Israeli rulers is replete with acts of terror perpetrated on those of our people who remained under occupation in Sinai and the Golan Heights. The criminal bombardment of the Bahr-al-Ba-

kar School and the Abou Zaabal factory are but two such unforgettable acts of terrorism. The total destruction of the Syrian city of Kuneitra is yet another tangible instance of systematic terrorism. If a record of Zionist terrorism in South Lebanon were to be compiled, the enormity of its acts would shock even the most hardened: piracy, bombardments, scorched earth, destruction of hundreds of homes, eviction of civilians and the kidnapping of Lebanese citizens. This clearly constitutes a violation of Lebanese sovereignty and is in preparation for the diversion of the Litani River waters.

Need one remind this Assembly of the numerous resolutions adopted by it condemning Israeli aggressions committed against Arab countries, Israeli violations of human rights and the articles of the Geneva Conventions, as well as the resolutions pertaining to the annexation of the city of Jerusalem and its restoration to its former status?

The only description for these acts is that they are acts of barbarism and terrorism. And yet, the Zionist racists and colonialists have the temerity to describe the just struggle of our people as terror. Could there be a more flagrant distortion of truth than this? We ask those who usurped our land, who are committing murderous acts

of terrorism against our people and are practising racial discrimination more extensively than the racists of South Africa, we ask them to keep in mind the United Nations General Assembly resolution that called for the one-year suspension of the membership of the Government of South Africa from the United Nations. Such is the inevitable fate of every racist country that adopts the law of the jungle, usurps the homeland of others and persists in oppression.

For the past 30 years, our people have had to struggle against British occupation and Zionist invasion, both of which had one intention, namely the usurpation of our land. Six major revolts and tens of popular uprisings were staged to foil these attempts so that our homeland might remain ours. Over 30,000 martyrs, the equivalent in comparative terms of 6 million Americans, died in the process.

When the majority of the Palestinian people was uprooted from its homeland in 1948, the Palestinian struggle for self-determination continued under the most difficult conditions. We tried every possible means to continue our political struggle to attain our national rights, but to no avail. Meanwhile, we had to struggle for sheer existence. Even in exile we educated our children. This was all a part of trying

to survive.

The Palestinian people produced thousands of physicians, lawyers, teachers and scientists who actively participated in the development of the Arab countries bordering on their usurped homeland. They utilized their income to assist the young and aged amongst their people who remained in the refugee camps. They educated their younger sisters and brothers, supported their parents and cared for their children. All along the Palestinian dreamt of return. Neither the Palestinian's allegiance to Palestine nor his determination to return waned; nothing could persuade him to relinquish his Palestinian identity or to forsake his homeland. The passage of time did not make him forget, as some hoped he would. When our people lost faith in the international community which persisted in ignoring its rights and when it became obvious that the Palestinians would not recuperate one inch of Palestine through exclusively political means, our people had no choice but to resort to armed struggle. Into that struggle it poured its material and human resources. We bravely faced the most vicious acts of Israeli terrorism which were aimed at diverting our struggle and arresting it.

In the past ten years of our struggle, thousands of martyrs and twice as many

wounded, maimed and imprisoned were offered in sacrifice, all in an effort to resist the imminent threat of liquidation, to regain our right to self-determination and our undisputed right to return to our homeland. With the utmost dignity and the most admirable revolutionary spirit, our Palestinian people has not lost its spirit in Israeli prisons and concentration camps or when faced with all forms of harassment and intimidation. It struggles for sheer existence and it continues to strive to preserve the Arab character of its land. Thus it resists oppression, tyranny and terrorism in their ugliest forms.

It is through our popular armed struggle that our political leadership and our national institutions finally crystallized and a national liberation movement, comprising all the Palestinian factions, organizations and capabilities, materialized in the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Through our militant Palestine national liberation movement, our people's struggle matured and grew enough to accommodate political and social struggle in addition to armed struggle. The Palestine Liberation Organization was a major factor in creating a new Palestinian individual, qualified to shape the future of our Palestine, not merely content with mobilizing the Palestinians for the challenges of

the present.

The Palestine Liberation Organization can be proud of having a large number of cultural and educational activities, even while engaged in armed struggle, and at a time when it faced the increasingly vicious blows of Zionist terrorism. We established institutes for scientific research, agricultural development and social welfare, as well as centres for the revival of our cultural heritage and the preservation of our folklore. Many Palestinian poets, artists and writers have enriched Arab culture in particular, and world culture generally. Their profoundly humane works have won the admiration of all those familiar with them. In contrast to that, our enemy has been systematically destroying our culture and disseminating racist, imperialist ideologies; in short, everything that impedes progress, justice, democracy and peace.

The Palestine Liberation Organization has earned its legitimacy because of the sacrifice inherent in its pioneering role, and also because of its dedicated leadership of the struggle. It has also been granted this legitimacy by the Palestinian masses, which in harmony with it have chosen it to lead the struggle according to its directives. The Palestine Liberation Organization has also gained its legitim-

acy by representing every faction, union or group as well as every Palestinian talent, either in the National Council or in people's institutions. This legitimacy was further strengthened by the support of the entire Arab nation, and it was consecrated during the last Arab Summit Conference, which reiterated the right of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in its capacity as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, to establish an independent national state on all liberated Palestinian territory.

Moreover, the Palestine Liberation Organization's legitimacy was intensified as a result of fraternal support given by other liberation movements and by friendly, like-minded nations that stood by our side, encouraging and aiding us in our struggle to secure our national rights.

Here I must also warmly convey the gratitude of our revolutionary fighters and that of our people to the non-aligned countries, the socialist countries, the Islamic countries, the African countries and friendly European countries, as well as all our other friends in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The Palestine Liberation Organization represents the Palestinian people, legitimately and uniquely. Because of this, the Palestine Liberation Organization ex-

presses the wishes and hopes of its people. Because of this, too, it brings these very wishes and hopes before you, urging you not to shirk a momentous historic responsibility towards our just cause.

For many years now, our people have been exposed to the ravages of war, destruction and dispersion. It has paid in the blood of its sons that which cannot ever be compensated. It has borne the burdens of occupation, dispersion, eviction and terror more uninterruptedly than any other people. And yet all this has made our people neither vindictive nor vengeful. Nor has it caused us to resort to the racism of our enemies. Nor have we lost the true method by which friend and foe are distinguished.

For we deplore all those crimes committed against the Jews; we also deplore all the real discrimination suffered by them because of their faith.

I am a rebel and freedom is my cause. I know well that many of you present here today once stood in exactly the same resistance position as I now occupy and from which I must fight. You once had to convert dreams into reality by your struggle. Therefore you must now share my dream. I think this is exactly why I can ask you now to help, as together we bring out our dream into a bright reality, our common

dream for a peaceful future in Palestine's sacred land.

As he stood in an Israeli military court, the Jewish revolutionary, Ahud Adif, said: "I am no terrorist; I believe that a democratic state should exist on this land." Adif now languishes in a Zionist prison among his co-believers. To him and his colleagues I send my heartfelt good wishes.

And before those same courts there stands today a brave prince of the church, Bishop Capucci. Lifting his fingers to form the same victory sign used by our freedom-fighters, he said: "What I have done, I have done that all men may live on this land of peace in peace." This princely priest will doubtless share Adif's grim fate. To him we send our salutations and greetings

Why therefore should I not dream and hope? For is not revolution the making real of dreams and hopes? So let us work together that my dream may be fulfilled, that I may return with my people out of exile, there in Palestine to live with this Jewish freedom-fighter and his partners, with this Arab priest and his brothers, in one democratic state where Christian, Jew and Muslim live in justice, equality, fraternity and progress.

Is this not a noble dream worthy of

my struggle alongside all lovers of freedom everywhere? For the most admirable dimension of this dream is that it is Palestinian, a dream from out of the land of peace, the land of martyrdom and heroism, and the land of history too.

Let us remember that the Jews of Europe and the United States have been known to lead the struggles for secularism and the separation of church and state. They have also been known to fight against discrimination on religious grounds. How can they continue to support the most fanatic, discriminatory and closed of nations in its policy?

In my formal capacity as Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and leader of the Palestinian revolution, I proclaim before you that when we speak of our common hopes for the Palestine of tomorrow we include in our perspective all Jews now living in Palestine who choose to live with us there in peace and without discrimination.

In my formal capacity as Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and leader of the Palestinian revolution, I call upon Jews to turn away one by one from the illusory promises made to them by Zionist ideology and Israeli leadership. They are offering Jews perpetual bloodshed, endless war and continuous thral-

dom.

We invite them to emerge from their moral isolation into a more open realm of free choice, far from their present leadership's efforts to implant in them a Masada complex.

In my formal capacity as Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, I announce here that we do not wish one drop of either Arab or Jewish blood to be shed; neither do we delight in the continuation of killing, which would end once a just peace, based on our people's rights, hopes and aspirations had been finally established.

In my formal capacity as Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and leader of the Palestinian revolution, I appeal to you to accompany our people in its struggle to attain its right to self-determination. This right is consecrated in the United Nations Charter and has been repeatedly confirmed in resolutions adopted by this august body since the drafting of the Charter. I appeal to you, further, to aid our people's return to its homeland from an involuntary exile imposed upon it by force of arms, by tyranny, by oppression, so that we may regain our property, our land, and thereafter live in our national homeland, free and sovereign, enjoying all the privileges of nationhood. Only then

can Palestinian creativity be concentrated on the service of humanity. Only then will our Jerusalem resume its historic role as a peaceful shrine for all religions.

I appeal to you to enable our people to establish national independent sovereignty over its own land.

Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom-fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand. I repeat: do not let the olive branch fall from my hand.

War flares up in Palestine, and yet it is in Palestine that peace will be born.

SPEECH TO THE UN ON DECEMBER 13, 1988

Before the 43rd session of the United Nations General Assembly

It never occurred to me that my second meeting with this honourable assembly since 1974 would take place in the hospitable city of Geneva. I had thought that the new political positions and postures evolved by our Palestinian people in the course of the Algiers meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC), all of which have been made public and extremely well received internationally, would have necessitated my travel to the United Nations headquarters in New York to brief you on our resolutions and projections on the issue of peace in our homeland as formulated by our PNC, the highest legislative authority in the Palestinian body politic.

I am both proud and happy to meet with you today, here in Geneva, after an arbitrary American decision barred me from going to you there. I am proud because I am in your midst and you are the highest rostrum for the problems of justice and peace in the world. I am happy because I am in Geneva, where justice and neutrality are a guidepost and a constitution in a world where the arrogance of power drives some to lose their sense

of neutrality and justice. The resolution passed by your esteemed assembly, with 154 member nations voting to move the session here, was not a victory over the American decision but an unprecedented landslide for the international consensus in favour of justice and peace. It is proof that our people's just cause has become embedded in the fabric of the human conscious.

Our Palestinian people will never forget the position taken by this honourable assembly and these friendly states in support of right and justice and in defence of the values and principles for which the United Nations organization was established. This position will be a source of confidence and security to all peoples subjected to injustice, oppression and occupation, and struggling, like the Palestinian people, for freedom, dignity and survival.

I extend deep gratitude to all nations, forces, international organizations and personalities who backed our people and supported its national rights — particularly our friends in the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, the socialist countries, the non-aligned states, the Islamic states, the African states, the Asian states, the Latin American states and other friendly states. I also thank the Western European nations and Japan for

their latest stands toward our people and I invite them to take further steps positively to evolve their resolutions in order to open the way for peace and a just settlement in our region, the Middle East.

I reiterate our solidarity with and support for the liberation movements in Namibia and South Africa in their struggle, and our support for the African frontline states against the aggression of the racist South African regime. I seize this opportunity to express my gratitude to those friendly states which took the initiative in supporting us, in endorsing our PNC resolutions, and in recognizing the State of Palestine.

And I will not miss this opportunity to thank warmly His Excellency the secretary-general of the United Nations, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, and his assistants for their relentless efforts to achieve humanity's aspirations for international détente and the settlement of its problems, particularly those related to the Palestine question. I also extend my thanks and appreciation to the chairman and members of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on their endeavours for our people's cause, and I salute the non-aligned nations' "Committee of Nine on the Palestine Question" for all its con-

structive contributions to our people's cause.

And to you, Mr. President, my warm congratulations on the occasion of your election as president of this assembly. I have full confidence in your wisdom and insight. I also congratulate your predecessor on his skilful handling of the proceedings of the previous session. Lastly, I extend warm greetings and thanks to the Swiss government and people for making this meeting possible.

Fourteen years ago on November 13, 1974, I received a gracious invitation from you to expound the problem of our Palestinian people before this dignified assembly. Here I am returning to you after all these eventful years to see new peoples taking their places in your midst, crowning thereby their victories in the battles for freedom and independence. To the representatives of these peoples, I extend the warm congratulations of our own. Let it be known that I return to you with a stronger voice, a firmer determination and a greater confidence to reiterate my conviction that our struggle will bear fruit and that the State of Palestine, which we proclaimed at our Palestine National Council, will take its place among you to join hands with you in consolidating the charter of this organization and the Uni-

versal Declaration of Human Rights, in putting an end to the tragedies afflicting humanity and in upholding the principles of right, justice, peace and freedom for all.

Fourteen years ago, when you told us in the General Assembly hall: “Yes to Palestine and the people of Palestine, yes to the Palestine Liberation Organization, yes to the inalienable national rights of the people of Palestine,” a few imagined that your resolutions would carry little weight, failing to realize that these resolutions were among the springs that watered the olive branch I carried that day. Since then, we have watered it with blood, tears and sweat, and it has turned into a tree with roots entrenched in the ground, and a stem reaching for the sky promising to bear the fruits of victory over coercion, injustice and occupation. You gave us hope that freedom and justice would triumph and we gave you a generation of our people that has dedicated its life to the realization of that dream. It is the generation of the blessed intifada, which today is wielding the homeland’s stones to defend the honour of this homeland and be worthy of belonging to a people thirsting for freedom and independence.

I bring you greetings from those heroic people, from our men and our women, from the masses of our blessed intifada,

which now enters its second year with great momentum and painstaking organization, using a civilized, democratic approach to weather and confront occupation, coercion, tyranny and the barbaric crimes committed daily by the Israeli occupiers. Greetings to you from our young men and women in the occupation forces' prisons and collective detention centres. Greetings from the children of stones who are challenging occupation forces armed with warplanes, tanks and weapons — an unarmed Palestinian David facing a heavily armed Israeli Goliath.

I said in concluding my address in our first encounter that as chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and leader of the Palestine revolution, I reaffirm that we do not wish to see a drop of Jewish or Arab bloodshed, that we do not want the continuation of the fighting for one extra minute. I appealed to you then to spare us all these ordeals and sufferings and to speed up work on the foundations of a just peace based on securing the rights, hopes and aspirations of our people and the equal rights of all peoples.

I said that I was calling upon you to stand by the struggle of our people to exercise its right to self-determination and to enable our people to return from the exile into which it was driven at gunpoint.

I solicited your help to end this injustice to which successive generations of our people have been subjected over several decades so that they can live free and sovereign on their soil and in their homeland, enjoying all their national and human rights. The last thing I said from this rostrum was that war breaks out from Palestine and that peace starts in Palestine.

The dream we entertained at the time was to establish a democratic State of Palestine in which Muslims, Christians and Jews would live with equal rights and obligations as one unified community, like other peoples in this contemporary world.

We were shocked to hear Israeli officialdom interpret this Palestinian dream inspired by the spiritual heritage that illuminated Palestine and the civilizational and humanitarian values calling for co-existence in a free democratic society as a scheme to destroy and obliterate their entity.

We had to draw the necessary conclusion regarding the gap between this reality and the dream. We set out in the Palestine Liberation Organization to look for realistic and attainable formulas that would settle the issue on the basis of possible, rather than absolute, justice while securing the rights of our people to freedom, sovereignty and independence; ensuring

for everyone peace, security and stability; and sparing Palestine and the Middle East wars and battles that have been going on for 40 years.

Didn't we take the initiative of relying on the charter and resolutions of the United Nations, the Declaration of Human Rights and international legitimacy as the basis for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

Did we not welcome the Vance-Gromyko communique of 1977 as a move that could form the basis of a proposed solution to this conflict? Did we not agree to participate in the Geneva conference on the basis of the American-Egyptian statement of 1977 to push forward the prospects of a settlement and peace in the region? Did we not endorse the Arab peace plan in Fez in 1982 and later the call for an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations and in keeping with its resolutions? Did we not underwrite the Brezhnev plan for peace in the Middle East? Did we not welcome and support the Venice declaration by the European Community as the basis for a just peace in the area? Did we not welcome and support the joint initiative of presidents Gorbachev and Mitterand on a preparatory committee for the international conference? Did we not welcome scores of political state-

ments and initiatives put forward by African, Islamic, non-aligned, socialist, European and other groups and states for the purpose of finding a peaceful settlement based on the principles of international legitimacy?

What has been the attitude of Israel on all this, even though not a single one of the aforementioned initiatives, plans or communiques lacks political balance or overlooks the claims and interests of all the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict?

Israel's response to all this has been the escalation of its settlement and annexation schemes; the fanning of the flames of conflict with more destruction, devastation and bloodshed; and the expansion of the confrontation fronts to include brotherly Lebanon, which was invaded by the occupation troops in 1982, an invasion punctuated with slaughters and massacres perpetrated against the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples, including the Sabra and Shatila massacres. Until this moment, Israel continues to occupy parts of south Lebanon, and Lebanon faces daily raids as well as air, sea and land attacks on its cities, villages and our camps in the south.

It is painful and regrettable that the American government alone should continue to back these aggressive and expansionist schemes as well as Israel's

continued occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories, its crimes and its iron-fist policy against our children and women. It is painful and regrettable, too, that the American government should continue refusing to recognize the right of six million Palestinians to self-determination, a right which is sacred to the American people and other peoples on this planet.

I remind them of the position of President Wilson, author of the two universal principles of international relations, i.e. the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and the right of peoples to self-determination. I remind them, too, that when the Palestinian people were consulted by the King-Crane Commission in 1919, they chose the United States as the mandatory power. Circumstances having prevented that, the mandate was given to Britain. My question to the American people is this: Is it fair that the Palestinian people should be deprived of what President Wilson prescribed?

Successive American administrations realize that the only birth certificate for the establishment of the State of Israel is Resolution 181, approved by the General Assembly on November 29, 1947, and endorsed at the time by the United States and the Soviet Union. It provides for the establishment of two states in Palestine,

one Palestinian Arab and one Jewish.

How then does the American government explain its position which acknowledges and recognizes the half of the resolution that pertains to Israel and rejects the half pertaining to the Palestinian state? How does the United States government explain its lack of commitment to the execution of a resolution that it has endorsed on more than one occasion in your esteemed assembly, i.e. UNGA Resolution 194, which provides for the right of the Palestinians to return to the homes and properties from which they were evicted and for compensation for those wishing not to exercise this right?

The United States government knows that neither the U.S. nor anyone else has the right to apportion international legitimacy and fragment the provisions of international law.

The uninterrupted struggle of our people for its rights has been going on for several decades during which it has offered hundreds of thousands of martyrs and wounded and endured all kinds of tragedies. On the contrary, its adherence to its Palestinian homeland and national identity has grown stronger.

The leaders of Israel, in their intoxication, deluded themselves into believing that, after our exodus from Beirut, the Pal-

estine Liberation Organization would be thrown into the sea. Little did they expect our march into exile to turn into a procession of return to the homeland, to the field of battle, to occupied Palestine. The result was the heroic popular intifada within our occupied land, the intifada which is there to stay until the fulfilment of our goals of freedom and national independence.

I take pride in being one of the sons of this people, whose men, women and children are writing with their blood an outstanding epic of national resistance and who are performing legendary miracles daily to sustain their intifada and make it grow until it can impose its will and prove that right can prevail over might. We salute with deep pride our people of the intifada as the authors of a unique democratic revolutionary experiment.

Theirs is the faith that could not be crushed by Israel's military machine; that could not be killed by any kind of ammunition; that could not be shaken by the burial of people alive, the breaking of bones, the inducement of miscarriages or the usurpation of water resources; and that could not be deterred by detention, internment, exile, deportation, collective punishment, the demolition of homes, the closure of universities, schools, trade unions, associations, institutions and newspapers; or

the laying of siege to camps, villages and towns. Those brutal reprisals have only served to strengthen that faith, spreading it to every household and giving it roots in every inch of our national soil.

A people with such a heritage and such a history is invincible. All the forces of tyranny and terror cannot sway its deep-rooted faith in its right to its homeland and in such values as justice, peace, love, coexistence and tolerance. The rifle of the revolutionary has protected us from liquidation and the destruction of our national identity in the arenas of hot confrontation. We are fully confident of our ability to protect our green olive branch in the arenas of political confrontation.

The worldwide embrace of our just cause, pressing for the realization of peace based on justice, demonstrates clearly that the world has unequivocally identified the predator and the prey, the aggressor and the victim, the struggler for freedom and peace and the terrorist. The day-to-day practices of the occupation army and the gangs of fanatic armed settlers against our people, women and children, have unveiled the ugly face of Israeli occupation and exposed its true aggressive nature.

This growing worldwide awareness has reached Jewish groups within Israel itself and outside. Their eyes have been opened

to the reality of the problem and the essence of the conflict, particularly since they have witnessed the inhuman, day-to-day Israeli practices that undermine the tolerant spirit of Judaism itself.

It has become difficult, if not impossible, for a Jew to reject racial persecution and uphold freedom and human rights while remaining silent about Israel's crimes against Palestinian human rights, the Palestinian people and the Palestinian homeland, particularly the ugly day-to-day practices of the occupiers and gangs of settlers.

We distinguish between the Jewish citizen whom the Israeli ruling circles have continuously sought to disinform and mislead, and the practices of the leaders of Israel. We realize that there are within and outside Israel courageous and honourable Jewish people who do not condone the Israeli government's policy of repression, massacres, expansion, settlement and expulsion, and who recognize the equal rights of our people to life, freedom and independence. On behalf of the Palestinian people, I thank them all for their courageous and honorable stance.

Our people does not want a right which is not its own or which has not been vested in it by international legitimacy and international law. It does not seek its

freedom at the expense of anyone else's freedom, nor does it want a destiny which negates the destiny of another people. Our people refuses to be better or worse than any other people. Our people wants to be the equal of all other peoples, with the same rights and obligations. I call upon all peoples of the world, especially those which were afflicted by the nazi occupation and considered it their duty to close the chapter of coercion and oppression by one people against another and to lend a willing hand to all the victims of terrorism, fascism and nazism, to see clearly today the responsibilities cast upon them by history toward our downtrodden people, which wants its children to have a place under the sun in their homeland — a place where they can live in freedom, like the rest of the children of the world.

It is cause for optimism that our struggle should culminate in the ongoing intifada when the international atmosphere is marked by a serious and sustained quest for international detente, accord and progress. We are heartened by the successes scored by the United Nations and its secretary-general in contributing effectively to settling many problems and defusing trouble spots around the world in this new environment of international detente.

Surely, it is impossible to consolidate

this new, positive international climate without addressing problems and trouble spots around the globe. This would enable us to formulate a more accurate and reliable yardstick to assess the endeavours of man and nations and to brace for the next century and the challenges and new responsibilities it will lay before us in terms of averting wars and destruction and promoting more freedom, well-being, peace and progress for mankind.

No one would dispute the fact that the Palestine problem is the problem of our contemporary world. It is the oldest on our agenda. It is the most intricate and complex. Of the regional issues, it poses the most serious threat to international peace and security. Hence, its priority among the issues that should command the attention of the two superpowers and all the countries of the world. Hence, the need for an effort to outline a course for its equitable solution — a solution that would spread peace across the Middle East.

We in the Palestine Liberation Organization — as a leadership responsible for the people of Palestine and its destiny, loyal to the struggle of our people, venerating the sacrifices of our martyrs, eager to contribute to the prevailing climate of coexistence and detente, and the consensus of the need to participate in the

peaceful efforts to find a political settlement that would put an end to the tragedies of wars and fighting and would open the way for peaceful coexistence under international law — summoned our Palestine National Council to convene in an extraordinary session in Algiers last November 12-15, the purpose being to specify and clarify our position as a main party to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which cannot be settled without its participation and approval.

It pleases me to inform you, with great pride, that our Palestine National Council, through a totally free exercise of democracy, has again demonstrated its ability to shoulder its national responsibilities, endorsing serious constructive and responsible resolutions which pave the way for us to reinforce and highlight our desire and contribution to find a peaceful settlement that would secure the national and political rights of our people as well as peace and security for everyone else.

The first and decisive resolution of our Palestine National Council was the proclamation of the establishment of the State of Palestine, with the Holy City of Jerusalem (Al-Quds) as its capital. The State of Palestine was declared:

“By virtue of the Palestinian Arab

people's natural, historic and legal right to their homeland, Palestine, and of the sacrifices of their successive generations in defence of the liberty and independence of their homeland;

“Pursuant to the resolutions of the Arab summit conference;

“By the authority of international legitimacy, as embodied in the resolutions of the United Nations since 1947;

“In implementation of the Palestinian Arab people's right to self-determination, political independence and sovereignty on their soil, and in conformity with your successive resolutions.”

It is important for me, in repeating this historic proclamation before the international community, now that it has become one of the official United Nations documents, to reaffirm that this decision is irreversible and that we will not relent until it succeeds in casting off the occupation, enabling our Palestinian people wherever they may be to exercise their sovereignty in their state, the State of Palestine. In it they shall develop their national and cultural identity and enjoy full equality in rights. Their religious and political beliefs and their human dignity shall be safeguarded under a democratic par-

liamentary system of government built on freedom of opinion; the freedom to form parties; the protection of the rights of the minority by the majority and respect for the decision of the majority by the minority; social justice and equal rights, free of ethnic, religious, racial or sexual discrimination; a constitution that guarantees the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary; and on the basis of total allegiance to the centuries-old spiritual and civilizational Palestinian heritage of religious tolerance and coexistence.

The State of Palestine is an Arab state; its people are an integral part of the Arab nation and of the nation's heritage, its civilization and its aspiration to attain its goals of social progress, unity and liberation. The State of Palestine is committed to the Charter of the League of Arab States, the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principles of non-alignment.

It is a peace-loving state committed to the principles of peaceful coexistence and it shall strive with all states and peoples to attain a permanent peace built on justice and respect of rights.

It is a state which believes in the settlement of international and regional disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the charter and resolutions of the

United Nations. It rejects threats of force, violence, terrorism or the use of these against its territorial integrity and political independence, or against the territorial integrity of any other state, without prejudice to its natural right to defend its territory and independence.

It is a state which believes that the future can only bring security to those who are just or have come back to justice. This is the State of Palestine which we proclaimed and which we shall endeavour to embody so that it can take its place among the states of the world and share creatively in shaping a free world where justice and peace prevail. Our state, God willing, shall have its provisional government at the earliest possible opportunity. The PNC has mandated the PLO Executive Committee to assume the functions of the said government in the interim.

To embody the aforementioned decision, our Palestine National Council adopted a series of resolutions. I am keen to spotlight the most salient of these, which underline our serious determination to pursue the path of an equitable peaceful settlement and to exert maximum effort to ensure its success.

Our PNC reaffirmed the necessity of convening an international conference on the issue of the Middle East and its core,

the Palestinian issue, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties to the conflict in the region, including, on an equal footing, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on the understanding that the international conference will be held on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and safeguarding the legitimate national and political rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among which is its right to self-determination.

Our PNC reasserted the need for Israel's withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab territories it occupied in 1967, including Arab Jerusalem; the establishment of the Palestinian state; the annulment of all expropriation and annexation measures; and the dismantling of the settlements established by Israel in the Palestinian and Arab territories since 1967, as called for in the Arab summit resolutions of Fez and Algiers.

Our PNC also reaffirmed the necessity of seeking to place the occupied Palestinian territories, including Arab Jerusalem, under the supervision of the United Nations for a limited period, to protect our people, to create an atmosphere condu-

cive to the success of the proceedings of the international conference toward the attainment of a comprehensive political settlement and the achievement of peace and security for all peoples and states in the Middle East, on the basis of mutual consent, and to enable the State of Palestine to exercise its effective authority in these territories, reaffirmed earlier by the resolutions of the Arab summits.

Our PNC called for the settlement of the issue of Palestinian refugees in accordance with the pertinent United Nations resolutions. It guaranteed freedom of worship and the right to engage in religious rites for all faiths in the holy places in Palestine. And it reconfirmed that the relationship between the fraternal Jordanian and Palestinian peoples is a privileged one and that the future relationship between the State of Palestine and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan will be built on confederal foundations, on the basis of the two fraternal peoples' free and voluntary choice, in consolidation of the historic ties that bind them and the vital interests they hold in common. The PNC reaffirmed the need for the Security Council to draw up and guarantee arrangements for security and peace between all the states that are parties to the conflict in the region.

It is important for me to point out that

these resolutions, in their content and wording, reflect our firm desire for peace and freedom, and our total awareness of the climate of international detente and of the eagerness of the international community to achieve balanced solutions that address the claims and fundamental interests of the parties in conflict. These resolutions attest to the solemnity of the Palestinian people's position on the question of peace; that they are committed to peace and believe that it should be secured and guaranteed by the Security Council under the aegis of the United Nations. These resolutions constitute a firm, unambiguous response to all arguments, prejudices, stands and pretexts used by some nations to cast doubt on the position and policy of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

At a time when our people were voting for peace through their intifada and their representatives in the PNC, thereby confirming their positive response to the prevailing mood of detente in international relations and to the growing trend toward the settlement of world conflicts by peaceful means, the Israeli government was fanning the flames of aggressive, expansionist conflicts and religious fanaticism, thereby announcing its adherence to the option of belligerence and the dismissal of our people's right.

The Palestine side, for its part, has formulated clear and responsible political positions which conform with the will of the international community, to promote the convening of the international peace conference and the success of its proceedings. The gratifying and courageous international backing as expressed in the recognition of the State of Palestine is further proof of the credibility of our course and resolutions and their compliance with the international will for peace.

While we greatly appreciate the free American voices that have explained and supported our position and resolutions, we note that the U.S. administration remains uncommitted to even-handedness in its dealings with the parties to the conflict. It continues to demand from us alone the acceptance of positions which cannot be determined prior to negotiation and dialogue within the framework of the international conference.

I would point out here that the answer to the many questions being posed, regardless of their source, rests solely on the acceptance of the equality of the two parties to the conflict and on the recognition of their equal rights on a reciprocal basis. And if the policies applied on the ground are any reflection of the policymakers intentions, it is the Palestinian side that

has more cause to worry and to demand reassurances about its fate and its future, facing as it does a state of Israel that is bristling with the latest of arms, including nuclear weapons.

Our Palestine National Council has reaffirmed its commitment to the UN resolutions that uphold the right of peoples to resist foreign occupation, colonialism and racial discrimination, and their right to struggle for independence. It has also reaffirmed its rejection of terrorism in all its forms, including state terrorism, emphasizing its commitment to its past resolutions in this regard, to the resolution of the Arab summit in Algiers in 1988, to UN resolutions 42/159 of 1987 and 61/40 of 1985, and to what was stated on this subject in the Cairo Declaration of November 7, 1985.

The position is clear and free of all ambiguity. And yet, I, as chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, hereby once more declare that I condemn terrorism in all its forms, and at the same time salute those sitting before me in this hall who, in the days when they fought to free their countries from the yoke of colonialism, were accused of terrorism by their oppressors, and who today are the faithful leaders of their peoples, stalwart champions of justice and freedom. I also offer

a reverent salute to the martyrs who have fallen at the hands of terrorism and terrorists, foremost among whom is my lifetime companion and deputy, the martyr-symbol Khalil al-Wazir, and the martyrs who fell in the massacres to which our people have been subjected in the various cities, villages and camps of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and South Lebanon.

The situation in our Palestinian homeland can bear no more waiting. Our people and our children, leading our march to liberty, holding aloft the torch of freedom, are being martyred daily for the sake of ending the occupation and laying the foundation of peace in their free, independent homeland and in the region as a whole.

For this reason, the Palestine National Council, taking into consideration the circumstances of the Palestinians and the Israelis and the need for a spirit of tolerance between them, built its resolutions on foundations of realism.

The United Nations bears an historic, extraordinary responsibility toward our people and their rights. More than 40 years ago, the United Nations, in its Resolution 181, decided on the establishment of two states in Palestine, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish. Despite the historic wrong that was done to our people, it is our view today that the said resolution

continues to meet the requirements of international legitimacy which guarantee the Palestinian Arab people's right to sovereignty and national independence.

The acceleration of the peace process in the region requires special efforts on the part of the international community, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union, who bear a great responsibility toward the cause of peace in our region. The United Nations, the permanent members of the Security Council, and all international blocs and bodies have a vital role to play at this stage. In my capacity as chairman of the PLO Executive Committee, presently assuming the functions of the provisional government of the State of Palestine, I therefore present the following Palestinian peace initiative:

First: That a serious effort be made to convene, under the supervision of the secretary-general of the United Nations, the preparatory committee of the international conference for peace in the Middle East — in accordance with the initiative of President Gorbachev and President Mitterand, which President Mitterand presented to your assembly toward the end of last September and which was supported by many states — to pave the way for the convening of the international conference, which commands universal sup-

port except from the government of Israel.

Second: In view of our belief in international legitimacy and the vital role of the United Nations, that actions be undertaken to place our occupied Palestinian land under temporary United Nations supervision, and that international forces be deployed there to protect our people and, at the same time, to supervise the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from our country.

Third: The PLO will seek a comprehensive settlement among the parties concerned in the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the State of Palestine, Israel and other neighbours, within the framework of the international conference for peace in the Middle East on the basis of resolutions 242 and 338 and so as to guarantee equality and the balance of interests, especially our people's rights, in freedom, national independence, and respect the right to exist in peace and security for all.

If these principles are endorsed at the international conference, we will have come a long way toward a just settlement, and this will enable us to reach agreement on all security and peace arrangements.

I hope it is clear to everyone that our Palestinian people, determined though they are to gain their legitimate national rights to self-determination, repatriation

and the ending of the occupation of the Palestinian state's territory, are equally determined to strive for those goals by peaceful means within the framework of the international conference under the sponsorship of the United Nations and in accordance with its charter and resolutions. I assure you that, like all other peoples on earth, we are a people that yearns for peace — and perhaps with greater enthusiasm, considering our long years of suffering and the harsh conditions that plague us and our children, who are deprived of the normalcy of a life free of war, free of tragedy, free of the torment of exile, free of hopelessness and daily anguish.

So let the voices supporting the olive branch, peaceful coexistence, and international entente be heard. Let all hands join in defence of an historic, possibly irreplaceable opportunity to put an end to a tragedy that has lingered too long and cost thousands of lives and the destruction of hundreds of villages and cities. We reach for the olive branch because it sprouts in our hearts from the tree of the homeland, the tree of freedom.

I come to you in the name of my people, offering my hands that we can make true peace, peace based on justice. I ask the leaders of Israel to come here, under the

sponsorship of the United Nations, so that together we can forge that peace. I say to them, as I say to you, that our people, who want dignity, freedom and peace for themselves and security for their state, want the same things for all the states and parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. And here, I would address myself specifically to the Israeli people in all their parties and forces, and especially to the advocates of democracy and peace among them. I say to them: Come, let us make peace. Cast away fear and intimidation. Leave behind the spectre of the wars that have raged continuously in the furnace of this conflict for the past 40 years. Set aside all threats of wars to come, whose fuel could only be the bodies of our children and yours. Come, let us make peace. Let us make the peace of the bold, far from the arrogance of power and the weapons of destruction; far from occupation, oppression, humiliation, murder and torture.

“Say: O Peoples of the Book! Come to common terms,” so that we can build peace in the land of peace, the land of Palestine. “Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, goodwill toward men.” “O Lord, thou art the peace, and the peace is of you, and the peace shall return unto you. Let us live, O Lord, in peace, and enter Heaven thy house, the house of

peace.” Finally, I say to our people: The dawn approaches. Victory is at hand. I see the homeland in your holy stones. I see the flag of our independent Palestine fluttering over the hills of our beloved homeland. Thank you. Peace be upon you, and God’s mercy and His blessings.



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