



public works
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Speech by Minister Patricia de Lille

Note to editors: The following speech was delivered by Minister Patricia de Lille at the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the people of Palestine held at DIRCO in Pretoria today.

Programme Director,

Your Excellency, Ambassador Hashim Dajani, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to South Africa,

Dean of Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency, Ambassador Bene Lofongo M'POKO

The Representative of the United Nations Centre, in Pretoria,

Your Excellencies,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished Guests and Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon, As-salaamu ailakum, goeie middag, molweni

I am indeed honoured to represent the people and the Government of South Africa at this gathering to mark the important occasion of the 42nd anniversary of the declaration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

As you may be aware, the date of 29 November is of great significance, for on this day, 72 years ago in 1947, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine, paving the way for the establishment and international recognition of the Israeli state.

It constituted a somber watershed in Palestinian history as their fate as perennial oppressed, dispossessed and exiled people was subsequently sealed.

On this same day in 1977, the UN passed a resolution calling for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

It's also on that day in 2012 when Palestine was recognised as a non-member observer state by the UN.

Today, instead of implementing the numerous resolutions of the UN General Assembly and the Security Council that establish the withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territories and from other occupied Arab territories, the occupying forces impose new policies.

These policies are far from contributing to the promotion of a just and long-lasting peace in the region and perpetuate the status quo and undermine the efforts made by the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination.

Our Palestinian sisters and brothers continue to struggle for their national and international recognition of their basic human rights.

These include their personal, political, social, economic and religious rights.

This day of solidarity remains again this year, an urgent call for concrete action and legislation to comprehensively liberate Palestinian communities from that which unjustly limits life, opportunity and natural developments toward normal existence.

Beyond decades of rhetoric caught within highly politicised circumstances, the lack of determined transparent political will has stolen life from innocent ordinary Palestinian people.

The 29th of November is a day where every Palestinian needs to feel their story is being told and retold again.

It is a day to tell people of conscious that solidarity goes beyond words. Solidarity is action to guarantee Palestinian rights on their land.

Solidarity means ultimately achieving peace based on justice and restoring hope for a better future.

In this regard, allow me to quote South Africa's first democratically elected resident, Nelson Mandela, who said: "Action without vision is only passing time, vision without action is day dreaming, but vision with action can change the world." END QUOTE.

Since the dawn of its democracy, the South African Government based on historical, and moral – human rights grounds, has committed its support for the Palestinian cause.

As the late Statesman Nelson Mandela said and I quote, "We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians." END QUOTE.

As such, the State of Palestine continues to remain a priority in South Africa's current international diplomacy and our Government will continue to campaign for the independence of Palestine under the two-state solution, based on the international recognition and independence of the viable State of Palestine, which is based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, existing peacefully as independent states.

The outstanding final status issues must be resolved through direct negotiations between the parties, with support from the international community.

The Israeli and Palestinian people face a shared fate on shared land.

There is no expunging the other. Yet, as we observe the day of Solidarity, we fear that with each day passing, the people of the region are losing any sense of connection, any sense of empathy, any sense of mutual understanding of our common humanity and common future.

To this end, we must continue to work to bring people together, to discover anew engaging forms of solidarity which stretch all parties to see all humanity more clearly, and to exercise justice for all with willful compassion as advised in the three Abrahamic faith communities.

To the international community, we address the appeal to remain faithful to the goal of achieving a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

The people of Palestine and the whole region need our support for their efforts to put an end to this conflict which has plagued the world for so long.

The achievement of a just and comprehensive peace will not only have an effect on the lives of the people of that region, it will reverberate around the globe and promote the cause of international peace and security in a fundamental way.

The goal remains to realise a just and lasting peace for which generations of Palestinians and Israelis have been longing - a peace that will end the occupation that started in 1967, end the conflict and ensure that an independent, viable and sovereign State of Palestine lives side by side with the State of Israel.

We call on the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to show vision and determination.

We also urge the international community to support the Israeli and Palestinian authorities forge a credible political path and create an environment conducive to a return to meaningful negotiations that will meet the legitimate aspirations of both sides.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in concluding today's proceedings, it is also an honour and with profound sadness to take this opportunity to bid farewell to His Excellency, Ambassador Hashim Dajani, the Ambassador of the State of Palestine to South Africa, whose term of duty comes to an end in South Africa on 30 November.

I therefore would like to convey on behalf of our Government and the people of South Africa our sincerest gratitude for the work that you have undertaken during your tenure in South Africa.

Your presence in South Africa was very much cherished and your valuable work contributed to the strengthening of relations between our country and Palestine, relations which we desire to continue and develop further.

Your Excellency, you have reached out to many sections of the South African society and earned the respect and admiration for your tenacity and resilient leadership in pursuing the Palestinian cause.

We would like to wish His Excellency the best in his future endeavours and trust his successor will build on the solid foundation he has laid.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I also would like to express on behalf of the organisers, my appreciation for your attendance and participation here today.

Let us reaffirm on this International Day of Solidarity with the People of Palestine, our commitment to advocating for peace, justice, security and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

I thank you.

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