

UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
Australian Parliament House
Canberra, 2 December 2019

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, Members of Parliament, Your Excellencies and distinguished guests.

It is my great pleasure to be here with you all to observe the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I would like to sincerely thank the United Nations Information Centre, the Federal Parliamentary Friends of Palestine and the Council of Arab Ambassadors for their effort towards today's event, and their firm and ongoing support for Palestinian rights. I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the three co-chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine – Maria Vamvakinou, Janet Rice and Ken O'Dowd – for their commitment to peace in Palestine, and their willingness to use their platform to spotlight the indignities and injustices that the Palestinian people continue to endure.

On November 29, 1947, the UNGA formally endorsed the partition resolution 181, which sanctioned the establishment of two sovereign states. Unfortunately, the establishment of one of those states has come at the expense of the ambitions for statehood of those who should by now be enjoying their rightful share.

The international community, in order to acknowledge the overwhelming support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, commemorates annually, on the day the partition resolution was passed, the 'UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People'. When you think about it, it makes sense: choosing *this* day is an acknowledgement of the dispossession, distress and injustice that commenced in 1947, triggered by that resolution, and that continue today. It's fitting, then, that such a day should be the prime occasion to express solidarity with our oppressed but unbroken people. It should also make us think: when and how will this conflict be resolved? Well, the international community has had an answer to that question for a while now, and today is yet another opportunity to shine a light on it.

As you all know, things have only deteriorated with time. The international community, largely because of US pressure and its veto power in the UNSC, has failed to translate its support for Palestinian self-determination into anything else, and was not able to sustain a genuine peace process based on international law and the relevant UN resolutions. Put simply, Israel has been allowed to get away with much more than just murder. The continued inaction is an invitation for Israel to persist with what it does so well – entrenching its settler-colonial enterprise at the expense of the freedom, dignity and lives of Palestinians.

The recent announcement by the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, that the Trump administration will no longer consider Israeli settlements to be inconsistent with international law, is obviously destructive, and beyond words. Following Jerusalem, UNRWA and the Golan Heights, Israel now has even less incentive to sue for peace. These policy shifts have re-written international law to suit the interests of one country at the expense of the integrity of the rules-based order. And, in practical terms, Trump has gift-wrapped most of what had been on Netanyahu's wish list, without demanding that Israel make any peace-focused concessions in return. *Some* 'deal of the century'.

Time and again we have stressed: if one party insists on stealing the other's land, forcibly evicting its inhabitants and demolishing their homes, and building Jewish-only mini-cities on that land, any meaningful and lasting resolution becomes impossible, especially one in which mutual respect and co-existence form the basis. Israel's model of religious entitlement and superiority simply isn't sustainable. Try as it may to turn the spotlight on Hamas and everything else that it claims are the main impediments to peace, its land theft and messianic fundamentalism should remain at the front of our minds, and shouldn't be downplayed with reference to Tel Aviv's social liberalism or Haifa's high-tech park. What we're concerned with is that zealous and sometimes armed settler on his front porch somewhere in the West Bank. *That* is the main impediment to peace.

The populist approach of both the US and Israel, which disdains the rights of indigenous peoples, should be confronted on a global level through bold positions and, more importantly, concrete actions, including the boycotting of all settlement products as a first step. The pressing issue now is not only Israel's colonial endeavours, but the willingness of the Trump administration to forge a new path and set precedents that trivialize and undermine international law, while promoting a narrow definition of 'national interest' that is based on naked power and, as our Foreign Minister said, the 'law of the jungle'.

In response to all of this, the Palestinian leadership has developed an integrated strategy to reclaim our narrative and identity, and to push back against the Israeli expansionist project that claims all of Palestine as theirs.

Our centre of focus remains the establishment of a sovereign, democratic and secular Palestinian state, based on the internationally recognised 1967 borders. It's a vision that ensures the fundamental right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is met, as well as the equally important right of return for the Palestinian refugees (based on the Palestinian National Program that was adopted in 1988). As long as Zionism – specifically, its demand for a Jewish demographic majority – remains unrelenting, this vision, even in the absence of political will in Israel, remains the only viable one.

In the meantime, the new Palestinian government is pushing ahead with its plan to disengage, as much as possible, from the Israeli economy so as to guarantee a state-building process that is based more on our own resources. This will be achieved by strengthening our industrial and agricultural sectors, ceasing patient transfers to Israeli hospitals and establishing trade relations with neighbouring countries, among other measures.

Let's be clear: the failure of the two-state solution will result in a one-state reality, where Israel will necessarily have to relinquish one of its founding principles as a democratic and Jewish state. Either an undemocratic, Jewish state would be formed, with the segregation of Palestinians, or a democratic, non-Jewish state would be formed, because if Palestinians are to be given equal civil and political rights, then it will no longer remain an exclusively Jewish state. This consideration has never been more important than it is right now, as we stand at this critical and unsettling juncture.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Truthfully, it is still a long and mountainous journey to achieve our national rights and enjoy the crisp air of statehood, but I believe that a well-paved road remains open.

Thank you.
