



The Mercy Seminar 2025, Term III.3

Text of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence - Algiers, November 15, 1988

On Nov. 15, 1988, the Palestinian National Council, meeting in Algiers, issued the Palestinian Declaration of Independence. The document renounced violence and terrorism, recognized Israel's right to exist, and accepted UN Resolutions 242 and 338 as the framework for peace negotiations and a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Declaration was written by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish.

Preamble

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,

Palestine, the land of the three monotheistic faiths, is where the Palestinian Arab people was born, on which it grew, developed and excelled. Thus the Palestinian Arab people ensured for itself an everlasting union between itself, its land, and its history.

Resolute throughout that history, the Palestinian Arab people forged its national identity, rising even to unimagined levels in its defense, as invasion, the design of others, and the appeal special to Palestine's ancient and luminous place on the eminence where powers and civilizations are joined. All this intervened thereby to deprive the people of its political independence. Yet the undying connection between Palestine and its people secured for the land its character, and for the people its national genius.

Struggle for Independence

Nourished by an unfolding series of civilizations and cultures, inspired by a heritage rich in variety and kind, the Palestinian Arab people added to its stature by consolidating a union between itself and its patrimonial Land. The call went out from Temple, Church, and Mosque that to praise the Creator, to celebrate compassion and peace was indeed the message of Palestine. And in generation after generation, the Palestinian Arab people gave of itself unsparingly in the valiant battle for liberation and homeland. For what has been the unbroken chain of our people's rebellions but the heroic embodiment of our will for national independence. And so the people was sustained in the struggle to stay and to prevail.

When in the course of modern times a new order of values was declared with norms and values fair for all, it was the Palestinian Arab people that had been excluded from the destiny of all other peoples by a

hostile array of local and foreign powers. Yet again had unaided justice been revealed as insufficient to drive the world's history along its preferred course.

Occupation

And it was the Palestinian people, already wounded in its body, that was submitted to yet another type of occupation over which floated that falsehood that "Palestine was a land without people." This notion was foisted upon some in the world, whereas in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations (1919) and in the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), the community of nations had recognized that all the Arab territories, including Palestine, of the formerly Ottoman provinces, were to have granted to them their freedom as provisionally independent nations.

Despite the historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian Arab people resulting in their dispersion and depriving them of their right to self-determination, following upon U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947), which partitioned Palestine into two states, one Arab, one Jewish, yet it is this Resolution that still provides those conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty.

Dispossession, Expulsion and Organized Terror

By stages, the occupation of Palestine and parts of other Arab territories by Israeli forces, the willed dispossession and expulsion from their ancestral homes of the majority of Palestine's civilian inhabitants, was achieved by organized terror; those Palestinians who remained, as a vestige subjugated in its homeland, were persecuted and forced to endure the destruction of their national life.

Thus were principles of international legitimacy violated. Thus were the Charter of the United Nations and its Resolutions disfigured, for they had recognized the Palestinian Arab people's national rights, including the right of Return, the right to independence, the right to sovereignty over territory and homeland.

Right of Return and Independence

In Palestine and on its perimeters, in exile distant and near, the Palestinian Arab people never faltered and never abandoned its conviction in its rights of Return and independence. Occupation, massacres and dispersion achieved no gain in the unabated Palestinian consciousness of self and political identity, as Palestinians went forward with their destiny, undeterred and unbowed. And from out of the long years of trial in ever-mounting struggle, the Palestinian political identity emerged further consolidated and confirmed.

The Palestine Liberation Organization

And the collective Palestinian national will forged for itself a political embodiment, the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole, legitimate representative recognized by the world community as a

whole, as well as by related regional and international institutions. Standing on the very rock of conviction in the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, and on the ground of Arab national consensus and of international legitimacy, the PLO led the campaigns of its great people, molded into unity and powerful resolve, one and indivisible in its triumphs, even as it suffered massacres and confinement within and without its home.

And so Palestinian resistance was clarified and raised into the forefront of Arab and world awareness, as the struggle of the Palestinian Arab people achieved unique prominence among the world's liberation movements in the modern era.

The Intifada, Forcing History

The massive national uprising, the intifada, now intensifying in cumulative scope and power on occupied Palestinian territories, as well as the unflinching resistance of the refugee camps outside the homeland, have elevated awareness of the Palestinian truth and right into still higher realms of comprehension and actuality. Now at last the curtain has been dropped around a whole epoch of prevarication and negation.

The intifada has set siege to the mind of official Israel, which has for too long relied exclusively upon myth and terror to deny Palestinian existence altogether. Because of the intifada and its revolutionary irreversible impulse, the history of Palestine has therefore arrived at a decisive juncture.

Declaration of Inalienable Rights

Whereas the Palestinian people reaffirms most definitively its inalienable rights in the land of its patrimony:

- Now by virtue of natural, historical and legal rights, and the sacrifices of successive generations who gave of themselves in defense of the freedom and independence of their homeland;
- In pursuance of Resolutions adopted by Arab Summit Conferences and relying on the authority bestowed by international legitimacy as embodied in the Resolutions of the United Nations Organization since 1947;
- And in exercise by the Palestinian Arab people of its rights to self-determination, political independence and sovereignty over its territory,
- The Palestine National Council, in the name of God, and in the name of the Palestinian Arab people, hereby proclaims the establishment of the State of Palestine on our Palestinian territory with its capital Jerusalem (Al-Quds Ash-Sharif).

“Palestine is the state of Palestinians wherever they may be”

The State of Palestine is the state of Palestinians wherever they may be. The state is for them to enjoy in it their collective national and cultural identity, theirs to pursue in it a complete equality of rights. In it will be safeguarded their political and religious convictions and their human dignity by means of a

parliamentary democratic system of governance, itself based on freedom of expression and the freedom to form parties.

The rights of minorities will duly be respected by the majority, as minorities must abide by decisions of the majority. Governance will be based on principles of social justice, equality and non-discrimination in public rights of men or women, on grounds of race, religion, color or sex, and the aegis of a constitution which ensures the rule of law and an independent judiciary. Thus shall these principles allow no departure from Palestine's age-old spiritual and civilizational heritage of tolerance and religious coexistence.

Palestine and the Arab World

The State of Palestine is an Arab state, an integral and indivisible part of the Arab nation, at one with that nation in heritage and civilization, with it also in its aspiration for liberation, progress, democracy and unity. The State of Palestine affirms its obligation to abide by the Charter of the League of Arab States, whereby the coordination of the Arab states with each other shall be strengthened. It calls upon Arab compatriots to consolidate and enhance the reality of state, to mobilize potential, and to intensify efforts whose goal is to end Israeli occupation.

The State of Palestine proclaims its commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations, and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It proclaims its commitment as well to the principles and policies of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Peaceful Coexistence Between States

It further announces itself to be a peace-loving State, in adherence to the principles of peaceful co-existence. It will join with all states and peoples in order to assure a permanent peace based upon justice and the respect of rights so that humanity's potential for well-being may be assured, an earnest competition for excellence may be maintained, and in which confidence in the future will eliminate fear for those who are just and for whom justice is the only recourse.

In the context of its struggle for peace in the land of Love and Peace, the State of Palestine calls upon the United Nations to bear special responsibility for the Palestinian Arab people and its homeland. It calls upon all peace-and freedom-loving peoples and states to assist it in the attainment of its objectives, to provide it with security, to alleviate the tragedy of its people, and to help it terminate Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Renouncing Use of Force, Violence and Terrorism

The State of Palestine herewith declares that it believes in the settlement of regional and international disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with the U.N. Charter and resolutions. With prejudice to its natural right to defend its territorial integrity and independence, it therefore rejects the threat or use of force, violence and terrorism against its territorial integrity or political independence, as it also rejects their use against territorial integrity of other states.

Recognition of the Fallen, Honoring Women

Therefore, on this day unlike all others, November 15, 1988, as we stand at the threshold of a new dawn, in all honor and modesty we humbly bow to the sacred spirits of our fallen ones, Palestinian and Arab, by the purity of whose sacrifice for the homeland our sky has been illuminated and our Land given life. Our hearts are lifted up and irradiated by the light emanating from the much blessed intifada, from those who have endured and have fought the fight of the camps, of dispersion, of exile, from those who have borne the standard for freedom, our children, our aged, our youth, our prisoners, detainees and wounded, all those ties to our sacred soil are confirmed in camp, village, and town.

We render special tribute to that brave Palestinian Woman, guardian of sustenance and Life, keeper of our people's perennial flame. To the souls of our sainted martyrs, the whole of our Palestinian Arab people that our struggle shall be continued until the occupation ends, and the foundation of our sovereignty and independence shall be fortified accordingly.

Therefore, we call upon our great people to rally to the banner of Palestine, to cherish and defend it, so that it may forever be the symbol of our freedom and dignity in that homeland, which is a homeland for the free, now and always.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:

*"Say: 'O God, Master of the Kingdom,
Thou givest the Kingdom to whom Thou wilt,
and seizes the Kingdom from whom Thou wilt,
Thou exalted whom Thou wilt, and Thou
abasest whom Thou wilt; in Thy hand
is the good; Thou are powerful over everything."*

The Amended Basic Law of 2003

In the Name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate.

Part I.

Article 3

Jerusalem shall be the capital of Palestine.

Article 4

- Islam shall be the official religion in Palestine. Respect for the sanctity of all other divine religions shall be maintained.
- The principles of Islamic Shari'a shall be a principal source of legislation.
- Arabic shall be the official language.

THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE'S APPEAL ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NAKBA

[Palestinian Appeal, read live Monday, June 14, 1998 at 12:15 a.m. by poet Mahmoud Darwish at the end of the Nakba march]

We, the Palestinian offspring of this sacred land, advocates of universal values, seekers of peace and freedom, the living testament of endurance and human dignity in the face of adversity, victims of half a century of perpetual night of occupation and dispersion -

Declare our resounding presence in time and place, despite all attempts to uproot us from the land which has borne our name from the beginning of time. Not emerging from the darkness of myth or legend, we were born in the pristine daylight of history on this land which gave birth to the most ancient of civilizations. On this land humanity found its way to building its first home, to planting its first wheat grain, to creating its first alphabet. From the hills of Jerusalem, the first prayers of gratitude rose to the Creator. Our land, modest in size, hosted vast cultures and civilizations, both in conflict and in harmony, our own culture emerging from the fullness of this diverse and rich heritage. Our human history began with the history of humanity. Our Arab history began with the history of the Arabs. The consciousness of our national history began with our resistance to conquest and greed, which beset our land.

Today, as we confront half a century of Nakba and resistance, pained at the continuing tragedy of our recent past, we cast our sights to the future that we are molding in hope and in the promise of freedom and justice. For we have vanquished all attempts at our obliteration and denial and at the eradication of the name of Palestine from the map of Palestine. On the fiftieth anniversary of one of the greatest crimes of the age, committed against the gentle people and land of Palestine, we stand in reverence in the sight of the martyrs who had offered their lives as a libation to the continuity of the land and its immortal name, in defense of our identity and sovereign existence on our land – a land infused with the words of God to humanity as with our ancestral blood. From the bereavement of mothers, to the captivity of prisoners, to the exile of generations, we stand in awe at the heroism of the ordinary individual and the collective will to endure, both Palestinian and Arab. Victims of a myth "A land without a people for a people without a land," we dared to intrude on the course of history and expose the falsehood that sought our denial. Slated for national obliteration and severance from the land, we have affirmed our identity and ties to our homeland, snatching our reality from the jaws of oblivion.

Four hundred and eighteen living and thriving Palestinian villages were razed to the ground in 1948 by the Zionist perpetrators of the myth and the crime. Terrorized, massacred, and expelled, most of the Palestinian nation was reduced to the status of refugees and stateless persons at the mercy of various host countries. Bereft of their birthright, the Palestinian refugees carried Palestine in their hearts along with their land deeds and the keys to their homes. Both the topography and demography of our reality remain alive in our collective memory and continuity. We have refused to adopt their distorted version of our history and we remain advocates and witnesses of the authentic narrative of Palestinian endurance and the will to live.

From revolution, to Intifada, to nation building, we have extracted recognition from the world. The dual injustice of exile and occupation could not break the will of a people bent on achieving freedom, dignity and the redemption of history. Thus, it was the PLO which first offered the olive branch as a genuine alternative to the gun. Peace was in sight, but not appeasement or capitulation. The PLO, the embodiment of our collective national identity, the guardian of the integrity of our past and the vehicle to the fulfillment of our future, has ensured the independence of our utterance and our will and has shaped the course of our destiny. It obtained recognition from the international community for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the right of return as anchors to secure us against the gales of loss and denial. Above all, Jerusalem, more than a right, is the soul of our being and the essence of harmony.

Our commitment to democracy and the politics of inclusion were expressed in the PLO's historical proposal of a secular, pluralistic, democratic state in Palestine. While Zionism insisted on a racist exclusivity which denied the humanity and rights of the other, we sought to affirm tolerance and celebrate diversity. The inclusive sharing of the historical land of Palestine having been denied by the Israeli drive for exclusive possession, we formulated the alternative of sharing the land on the basis of the two-state solution. Such a solution would meet the imperative of international legality as defined by UN resolution 181, and would grant the Palestinian people relative justice on their land. It would also grant reprieve for tortured Jerusalem to be celebrated as an eternal city and our eternal capital.

The transition from the historical memory of Palestine as a homeland to the collective endeavor to establish Palestine as a geo-political state on part of historical Palestine, signals a painful and difficult transformation in the political discourse as well as in the national ethos of the Palestinian people. While it demands recognition as a conciliatory compromise of historical magnitude, it must not be misconstrued as self-negation or weakness. Rather, it demands an immediate and unequivocal recognition of our legitimacy and right to sovereignty as a nation among equals. The vision, courage and moral magnanimity of the victim reaching out to the oppressor must not be met with further rejection, denial and victimization.

The world now is called upon to undertake not only a recognition of guilt and admission of culpability in relation to the Palestinian people, but also to undertake an active and massive process of rectification to secure the implementation of Palestinian rights. The international community is called upon to intervene effectively to rescue the peace process in the face of current Israeli extremism and politics of threat, intimidation and power, rather than succumbing to Israeli demands, pressures, and unilateral policies and measures. In pursuing a policy of colonization and land confiscation, reneging on signed agreements, negating the terms of reference of the peace process, violating the timetable and denying the agenda of permanent status talks, while continuing the imposition of collective punitive measures on the Palestinian people, Israel is not only attempting to derail the peace process but also to destroy any prospects of peace in the future. In reviving fundamentalism, hostility, and distrust, Israel is also drawing the whole region outside the course of contemporary history and into an anachronistic future of conflict and violence.

True stability, security and prosperity can emanate only from a genuine peace which incorporates the basic principle of justice. Such is the Palestinian vision and the Palestinian collective endeavor. No amount of pain or suffering can justify the victimization and infliction of injustice on others. While we extend a compassionate recognition of the unspeakable Jewish suffering during the horror of the holocaust, we find it unconscionable that the suffering of our people be denied or even rationalized.

As victims, we seek to prevent the recurrence of pain, regardless of the identity of the perpetrator or the recipient. No country or nation must pretend to be, or must be perceived to be, above the law or beyond accountability. If Israel seeks recognition and legitimacy then it must comply with the norms and laws that govern the behavior of civilized nations. The arrogance of power may prevail, but only temporarily. Only a just peace can lay claim to durability and permanence.

We do not seek to be captives of history or victims of the past. The Palestinian people have launched a redemptive journey to the future. From the ashes of our sorrow and loss, we are resurrecting a nation celebrating life and hope. We will not surrender. Nor will we lose faith in a just and genuine peace that will enable us to exercise our right to independence and sovereignty. Fifty years since the Nakba were not spent in grief over a painful memory. The past has not entirely departed, nor has the future entirely arrived yet. The present is an open potential to struggle. For 50 years, Palestinian history has stood witness to epics of perseverance and resistance, to confronting the implications, consequences and injustices of the Nakba. For half a century Palestinian history became a living pledge to future generations for their right to a life of freedom and dignity on their own land. We have begun painstakingly the nation-building process, to ensure a free homeland for a free people. The state of Palestine is returning to contemporary history after 50 years of forced eviction, a state embodying the principles and practice of democracy, separation of powers, human rights, gender equality, accountability, and the rule of law. Despite the present constraints of geography and transition, our vision remains expansive and unfettered. For we thrive on the spirit of resistance and the longing for freedom, motivated by that will which produced the luminous flame of the Intifada.

Born in Palestine, no other land gave us birth. No other can claim our future. Nor can Jerusalem be replaced as our capital or extracted from our land and our being: It is the home of our souls and the soul of our homeland, forever.

(Nakba: The catastrophe which befell the Palestinian people in 1948, as Zionist gangs massacred innocent men, women, and children, pillaged their homes, and destroyed their villages and towns. Thus, the creation of the State of Israel over usurped Palestinian land led to the dual injustice of the dispossession and exile of the majority of the Palestinian people and the languishing of the rest under occupation.)