



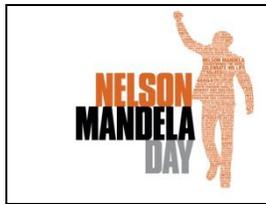
# **ALL INDIA PEACE & SOLIDARITY ORGANISATION (AIPSO)**

**West Bengal State Committee**

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## **Address by President Nelson Mandela at the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, 4 December 1997, Pretoria, South Africa**

Distinguished Guests,

We have assembled once again as South Africans, our Palestinian guests and as humanists to express our solidarity with the people of Palestine.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the organisers of the event, particularly the United Nations Information Centre and the UNISA Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies for this magnificent act of compassion, to keep the flames of solidarity, justice and freedom burning.

The temptation in our situation is to speak in muffled tones about an issue such as the right of the people of Palestine to a state of their own. We can easily be enticed to read reconciliation and fairness as meaning parity between justice and injustice. Having achieved our own freedom, we can fall into the trap of washing our hands of difficulties that others face.

Yet we would be less than human if we did so.

It behoves all South Africans, themselves erstwhile beneficiaries of generous international support, to stand up and be counted among those contributing actively to the cause of freedom and justice.

Even during the days of negotiations, our own experience taught us that the pursuit of human fraternity and equality - irrespective of race or religion - should stand at the centre of our peaceful endeavours. The choice is not between freedom and justice, on the one hand, and their

opposite, on the other. Peace and prosperity; tranquility and security are only possible if these are enjoyed by all without discrimination.

It is in this spirit that I have come to join you today to add our own voice to the universal call for Palestinian self-determination and statehood.

We would be beneath our own reason for existence as government and as a nation, if the resolution of the problems of the Middle East did not feature prominently on our agenda.

When in 1977, the United Nations passed the resolution inaugurating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people; it was asserting the recognition that injustice and gross human rights violations were being perpetrated in Palestine. **In the same period, the UN took a strong stand against apartheid; and over the years, an international consensus was built, which helped to bring an end to this iniquitous system.**

**But we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians; without the resolution of conflicts in East Timor, the Sudan and other parts of the world.**

We are proud as a government, and as the overwhelming majority of South Africans to be part of an international consensus taking root that the time has come to resolve the problems of Palestine.

Indeed, all of us marvelled at the progress made a few years ago, with the adoption of the Oslo Agreements. Leaders of vision, who saw problems not merely from the point of view of their own narrow constituency, had at least found a workable approach towards friendship and peaceful co-existence in the Middle East.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to these Palestinian and Israeli leaders. In particular, we pay homage to the memory of Yitshak Rabin who paid the supreme sacrifice in pursuit of peace.

We are proud as humanists, that the international consensus on the need for the implementation of the Oslo Agreements is finding expression in the efforts of the multitude of Israeli and Palestinian citizens of goodwill who are marching together, campaigning together, for an end to prevarication. These soldiers of peace are indeed sending a message to us all, that the day is not far off, when Palestinian and Jewish children will enjoy the joy abandon of children of God in a peaceful and prosperous region.

These soldiers of peace recognise that the world we live in is rising above the trappings of religious and racial hatred and conflict. They recognise that the spurning of agreements reached in good faith and the forceful occupation of land can only fan the flames of conflict. They know from their own experience that, it is in a situation such as this, that extremists on all sides thrive, fed by the blood lust of centuries gone by.

These Palestinian and Israeli campaigners for peace know that security for any nation is not abstract; neither is it exclusive. It depends on the security of others; it depends on mutual respect and trust. Indeed, these soldiers of peace know that their destiny is bound together, and that none can be at peace while others wallow in poverty and insecurity.

Thus, in extending our hands across the miles to the people of Palestine, we do so in the full knowledge that we are part of a humanity that is at one, that the time has come for progress in the implementation of agreements. The majority of the world community; the majority of the people of the Middle East; the majority of Israelis and Palestinians are suing for peace.

But we know, Mr. Chairman, that all of us need to do much much more to ensure that this noble ideal is realised.

As early as February 1995, our government formalised its relations with the State of Palestine when we established full diplomatic relations. We are proud of the modest technical assistance that our government is offering Palestine in such areas as Disaster Management, women's empowerment and assistance to handicapped children. But the various discussions with our counterparts in Palestine are an indication that we can do more.

We need to do more as government, as the ANC and other parties, as South Africans of all religious and political persuasions to spur on the peace process. All of us should be as vocal in condemning violence and the violation of human rights in this part of the world as we do with regard to other areas. We need to send a strong message to all concerned that an attempt by anyone to isolate partners in negotiations from their own mass base; and attempt to co-opt them is bound to hurt the peace process as a whole.

We must make our voices heard calling for stronger action by world bodies as well as those states that have the power, to act with the same enthusiasm in dealing with this deadlock as they do on other problems in the Middle East.

Yes, all of us need to do more in supporting the struggle of the people of Palestine for self-determination; in supporting the quest for peace, security and friendship in this region.

But at least we can draw comfort from the fact that, our meeting today is yet another small expression of our empathy.

We hope that, by this humble act, we are strengthening the voice of peace and friendship in Israel and Palestine; so that, as we enter the new millennium, we shall all have taken a giant stride towards a world in which our humanity will be the hallmark of our relations across colour, religious and other divides.

I thank you.

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**Address by ANC President, Nelson Mandela, at the opening of the 37th Congress of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 21 August 1993, Johannesburg, South Africa**

“As a movement we recognise the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism just as we recognise the legitimacy of the Zionism as a Jewish nationalism. We insist on the right of the state of Israel to exist within secure borders but with equal vigour support the Palestinian right to national self-determination. ...

The ANC, in common with the international community, was extremely unhappy about the military cooperation between the State of Israel and the apartheid regime in South Africa. The refusal of Israel, over many years, to honour its international obligations to isolate the apartheid regime did influence our attitude towards that government.”

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In a speech at Lusaka airport in Zambia on **27 February 1990**, Mandela said that PLO chief Yasser Arafat “is fighting against a unique form of colonialism, and we wish him success in his struggle.”

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Mandela stated at a news conference on **28 February 1990**: “I believe that there are many similarities between our struggle and that of the PLO... We live under a unique form of colonialism in South Africa, as well as in Israel, and a lot flows from that.”

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**During his visit to Australia, Nelson Mandela commented on 25 October 1990:**

“We identify with them [the Palestinians] because we do not believe it is right for the Israeli government to suppress basic human rights in the conquered territories... We agree with the United Nations that international disputes should be settled by peaceful means. The belligerent attitude which is adopted by the Israeli government is to us unacceptable... If one has to refer to any of the parties as a terrorist state, one might refer to the Israeli government, because they are the people who are slaughtering defenseless and innocent Arabs in the occupied territories, and we don't regard that as acceptable.”

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