

BERNAMA NEWS ARTICLE BY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS DATUK SAIFUDDIN ABDULLAH ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, 29 NOVEMBER 2018

1. The observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People today is a stark reminder to everyone that the Palestinian issue has yet to be resolved. Malaysians have always remained steadfast and committed to our Palestinian brothers and sisters to put an end to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.
2. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is a global observance day organised by the UN which falls on every 29 November every year. The date was chosen due to its significance to the Palestinian people. It was on this day in 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 (II), which later became known as the Partition Resolution. That resolution provided for the establishment in Palestine of a "Jewish State" and an "Arab State", with Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* (a separate entity) under a special international regime.
3. It is truly disappointing to note that after more than seven decades, only one side of the Two-State Solution has come into form (Israel), while the Palestinian people are still left struggling for justice, peace, and a sovereign state of their own. The international efforts at finding a just solution to this issue have remained mostly unsuccessful or unimplemented. The world has repeatedly witnessed Israel's continuous and blatant disregard for the international law and the overwhelming view of the international community. The so-called major powers seem powerless or unwilling to reprimand Israel for its obstinacy.
4. In spite of that, Malaysia's foreign policy towards Palestine has remained the same since decades ago. We will always support Palestine. The Palestinian Declaration of Independence proclaimed the establishment of the State of Palestine on 15 November 1988. Many countries, including Malaysia, promptly acknowledged it.
5. During the tabling of the motion on the foreign policy framework for New Malaysia at the Parliament on 15 October this year, I spoke at length the importance that Malaysia attaches to the Palestinian issue. I take pride that there was also active participation from the Members of Parliament from both sides of the political divide when discussing the matter. It was a testament that the Government and the people of Malaysia remain and will be fully committed to putting forth our support for the restoration of the inalienable rights to self-rule for the Palestinians and the establishment of an independent state of Palestine.
6. At a more practical level, extending humanitarian assistance is a priority for Malaysia. It is a way of showing that we are with them. These contributions include both in cash and in-kind, through a three-pronged approach via government-to-government, multilateral organisations, and Malaysia's non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Malaysia is also a frequent contributor in terms of financial assistance at the multilateral fora, namely the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) - a UN agency established in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. However, bilateral efforts alone will not usher in any meaningful solutions or resolutions to the Palestinian issue.
7. The international community must lead the way and strengthen the multilateral system in finding a just and long-lasting solution. We have witnessed constant failures in bilateral negotiations for the past decades to resolve the Palestine-Israeli conflicts. Such failures only resulted in the status quo in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It is in this spirit that Malaysia has unequivocally expressed its position through various international fora including the UN, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

8. During Malaysia's tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC for the term 2015 – 2016, Malaysia had participated actively in all monthly meetings and quarterly open debates at the UNSC on the issue of Palestine. Malaysia consistently voiced its support for the Palestinian struggle for an independent and sovereign state and called on the UNSC to shoulder its UN Charter responsibility and end the conflict.
9. In pushing forward the Palestinian agenda at the UN, Malaysia organised three informal Arria-formula meetings on the reconstruction of Gaza following the attack on Gaza in July 2014, on the need for international protection for the Palestinians to ensure that international laws are adhered to; on Israel illegal settlements and urged that the illegal settlements be halted immediately.
10. The last initiative had paved the way for the adoption of Resolution 2334 on 23 December 2016, whereby, Malaysia alongside New Zealand, Senegal, and Venezuela tabled a draft UNSC resolution on the Palestine – Israel conflict. The resolution calls for the cessation of all Israeli settlement activities and for affirmative steps to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are endangering the two-state solution. It also urges all parties to take immediate measures to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror and calls for accountability. The text further urges all parties to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East and to end Israeli occupation. It also requests the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) to submit a written report to the Council every three months on the implementation of the resolution.
11. The Resolution 2334 received 14 votes in favour and an abstention by the United States (US), which marked an important and historic victory for the Palestinian people, and a significant blow to Israel. It is noteworthy that the last time the UNSC adopted a draft resolution on illegal Israeli settlement was 38 years ago in 1980. The previous attempt to push for a draft resolution on illegal Israeli settlements at the UNSC failed in 2011, as it was vetoed by the US.
12. Malaysia is also a member of the NAM Ministerial Committee on Palestine together with 14 other countries. The Committee is chaired by the Chairman of NAM, which is currently chaired by Venezuela. The Meeting of NAM Ministerial Committee on Palestine is held not only during the triennial NAM Summit, but also at the NAM Ministerial Conference, extraordinary meeting, sidelines of the annual UNGA and also regular NAM Committee Meeting at the level of Permanent Representatives in New York.
13. The issue of Palestine was the main reason for the establishment of the OIC in 1969. As a founding member, Malaysia continues to play an active role in the OIC, in addressing the Palestinian issue at the international fora. The OIC established the Committee of Six on Palestine in 1981, of which Malaysia is a member. The Committee meets annually at the sidelines of the UNGA in New York. It follows up on the implementation of resolutions adopted by the OIC, as well as the sanctions against Israel for violating various international human rights and the rule of law. The OIC Committee of Six on Palestine meeting was held recently on 26 September 2018. The 7th Extraordinary Islamic Summit which was held in Istanbul, Turkey on 18 May 2018 had reflected the strong support of the OIC to the Palestinian cause. The Summit was held as a response to the brutal acts committed by the Israeli forces which killed at least 60 and injured nearly 2700 Palestinians on 14 May 2018.
14. After more than seven decades of struggle, the world still awaits for the birth of a sovereign state of Palestine. The UN can and must intervene effectively by establishing a UN mission or authorising an international presence to monitor the situation, ease the tension and maintain peace and security on the ground. Moreover, there is now an urgent need for everyone to manifest solidarity with Palestine by starting a global, people-based campaign in support of the continuing struggle of the Palestinian people.

15. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, it is my responsibility to uphold Malaysia's long-standing support to Palestine. This responsibility is not confined to diplomatic and political aspects only but also includes material support in various forms such as financial, humanitarian and infrastructure development. It is my fervent hope that the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people will heighten public awareness of all aspects of the Palestinian question and promote broader international support and assistance to the Palestinian people.
16. The international community cannot and must not fail the Palestinians. Malaysia stands ready to continue playing its part.