

**SPEECH BY TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD AT THE PALESTINE
FORUM AT CROWNE PLAZA MUTIARA, KUALA LUMPUR
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1. Thank you for your presence at this forum on Palestine. I think it is important that we remind ourselves briefly of the background of this tragic country.

2. When after the Second World War, the Europeans had to give up their empires; they left behind time bombs, which regularly exploded, making the development of the ex-colonies fraught with danger and obstacles. Nearly all the newly independent states emerging from European colonisation have not been stable, been able to develop themselves, giving the impression that these ex-colonies are unable to manage independence. Many even think that they should remain as colonies.

3. Of the ex-colonies, which have to manage the continuously exploding time bombs, none is worse than the mandated territory of Palestine.

4. Britain, who was given the mandate for Palestine had no right to carve the State of Palestine in order to create the state of Israel. It is shameful that Britain should succumb to the terrorism of the Haganah and the Irgun, and Zionist pressures and reneged on the conditions of the mandate. It was a totally irresponsible and dishonorable act unworthy of a country that was a great power that had just won a great war.

5. The Arab Palestinian not only lost much of their land but they were driven out of the portion given to the Jews. Their land was expropriated with no compensation and many were massacred at Deir Yassin, al-Dawayina, Eilaboun, Jish, Ramle and Laydda.

6. Since 1948, the Palestinians had to live as refugees in refugee camps under terrible conditions. Their children grew without proper schooling.

7. One would have thought that the imperialists who had wronged the Palestinian Arabs would at least help them reclaim their rights in the state that is now called Israel. But instead we find Britain and the United States in particular giving military aid to the Israelis even when they openly seize more Palestinian land and set up Jewish settlements on land that is not theirs.

8. There are some who blame the Palestinians for what they term as terrorism. I have no liking for irresponsible acts which result in the killing of people, innocent civilians whether Jews or Muslims. In fact I am against war i.e. the killing of people as a way of solving conflicts. But when the Arabs mounted a conventional war against Israel to regain Palestinian land, what did the British

and the Americans, the people responsible for the outbreak of fighting between Jews and Muslims do? They provided Israel with military support so that the Arab states of Jordan, Syria and Egypt were defeated.

9. Unable to get any help from the Arab nations, non-sympathy from other nations, the Palestinians finally had to fight an unevenly matched struggle against a brutal Israel. Perhaps they should know that they could not win against Israel with America's backing. But this is their land unlawfully occupied by the Israelis and even if they have to fight alone against their oppressors they have to do so. After abortive attempts to dislodge the Israelis, without weapons to match those of the Israeli military, they had no choice but to use methods which must be physically very painful and terrifying to them. It is not something people would like to do – tying explosives to your body and blowing yourself up. But desperate people have to resort to desperate things. And suicide bombings became their main weapon.

10. If they cannot do this what can they do when the Israelis expanded their territory, building roads on Palestinian land, which the Palestinians were barred from using, building high walls to break-up Palestinian families and their villages.

11. I went to Palestine and was shocked to find that entry into Palestine is controlled by Israelis armed with machine guns. Their checkpoints deliberately delayed my entry into Palestine by more than two hours so that I could not visit the village of Jenin where Israel had destroyed houses while their occupants were still inside, where the whole village was reduced to rubble by Israeli guns and bombs. I could not go to Jerusalem because the Israelis declared that it was dangerous, as if they cared for me. And everywhere I saw Israeli settlements guarded by armed militia while the Arabs were forced to build huts and live in them with their animals on their land to prevent seizure by Israelis for their settlements.

12. I was shocked that the Palestinians were not even allowed to call the remaining land that had formed the state of Palestine after the UN carved up a part of it to create Israel, the State of Palestine.

13. The Israelis insisted and the international community appeared to acquiesce that there is no State of Palestine, only a Palestinian Authority. Yet the United Nations when it agreed to create a state of Israel on Palestinian land referred to the partition as two separate states of Israel and Palestine. How come today there is no Palestine?

14. At any time Israeli tanks could enter Palestinian towns as if land under the control of what is called the Palestinian Authority is actually under Israeli rule. When I was there Israeli armored cars actually drove through Ramallah. I was told Israeli tanks had surrounded the building where Arafat was forced to seek shelter and Israel's guns kept up a continuous bombardment.

15. The Americans and the British insisted that the Palestinians hold elections to determine who should be the Palestinian Authority. The contest was between Fatah and Hamas. Hamas won hands down.

16. The least the British and the Americans could do was to accept the result of the elections. But these backers of Israel rejected the results of the election because they do not like Hamas.

17. If other countries reject the results of elections these so-called democracies would condemn them. But we now see the great proponents of democracy themselves rejecting the results of the democratic process.

18. But perhaps this is to be expected. America and Britain which had previously condemned detention without trial are now detaining people without trial and without even the benefit of the law. And the American Congress went so far as to make torture legal.

19. In the meanwhile the Palestinians have been subjected to condemnation for defending as best they could but the Western Press played up the futile retaliation by the Palestinians as terrorism. That the Israelis attack, kill, destroy and arrest Palestinians at will, terrorising them does not make them terrorists.

20. In a recent newspaper report in Malaysia, we are told that the Israelis blasted a car in which a terrorist was traveling. We know the Israelis are technologically advanced. But how could they know which car was carrying a Palestinian "terrorist". Every time a car or a home is blasted by the Israelis we are told by our own papers that there were terrorists in the car or the house. Can we believe the Jewish controlled Western press?

21. What we do know for a fact is that schools, including a UN school and hospitals have been blasted by Israeli guns and the victims are plainly children and ordinary people. How come they fail to recognise that they were targeting children when their guns and tanks were so close?

22. Hamas may have fired rockets into Israel. But it was not without provocation. The Israelis had blockaded Gaza under the excuse that arms may be smuggled into the strip. Why is it so wrong for the Palestinians to get some pitifully inadequate weaponry when the US supplies guns, rockets, bombs, tanks and warplanes to the Israelis with which to blast Palestinian towns out of existence, with which to kill children?

23. The peculiar thinking of the Western backers of Israel was also demonstrated during the Serbian ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina when the West did not allow the Bosnians to be supplied with weapons because they will cause more deaths in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It would seem that they wanted

to see only the Bosnians killed. The Serbs were to be saved. Yet they talk of Serb brutalities.

24. This is also the case with Palestine. The Palestinians must not be supplied with weapons so that they would be totally defenseless in the face of Israeli attacks, so that the Palestinians would be killed, so that the Israeli killers would be saved, so that the Israeli killers would be able to kill with impunity.

25. The same thinking also resulted in allowing Israel to have nuclear weapons while those against Israel are castigated and prevented from having similar weapons. Sanctions are applied against them even when Israel is being supplied with more brutish weapons like cluster bombs and depleted uranium shells and bombs.

26. War is inhuman and war should be made a crime. People should stop killing people to settle their conflicts. But far worse than the killing in war is the murder of people who have been deliberately deprived of the means to defend themselves, to save their lives.

27. What kind of people are these great powers whose idea of fairness is to literally tie up the hands of the opponents so that their thugs can beat them to a pulp.

28. This is what we are seeing in Gaza. Yes the Gazans may have rockets but the scale of the so-called retaliation by Israel is beyond what can be considered as retaliation. It is nothing less than deliberate genocide worthy of primitive people. And yet the Israelis claim they are the most intelligent people with the greatest number of Nobel Laureates and scientific achievements. The greatness of a people cannot be measured by cerebral brilliance alone. Heartless people and bullies are not great. They will go down in history as inhuman brutes. And those who support them must be considered equally brutish.

29. Some apologists for Israel claim that the Palestinians have rejected peace, have been deliberately provocative. But what is the peace that is offered the Palestinians?

30. It consists of being subservient to the Israelis and the Americans. It consists of rejecting their duly elected Government. It consists of giving up land that has been occupied by Israelis during peace as well as through one-sided wars. It means accepting Jewish settlements on Palestinian land, and denial of the Right of Return of the Arab refugees.

31. The peace that is offered by America and the West is the peace for a subservient Israeli colony, where the Palestinian may not even call their land

Palestine, where Israeli forces have full liberty to do what they like in the land of the Palestine.

32. Israeli brutality is unprecedented and shameless. The world knows that Israeli forces attack, kill and maim innocent children, women, the sick and the infirm. They deliberately starve their would be victims and deny them medical service and fuel for power so as to weaken them before they attacked. And they attack with forces and weapons out of all proportions to the strength or military capability of their victims. And they do all these knowing that the mighty forces of the United States will be right behind them, ready to support their brutal wars.

33. The Americans and the Israelis are forever demanding that the Palestinians stop their terror attacks before there could be peace talks. Why should the Palestinians do that when the Israelis still occupy their land and enforce their rule on Palestinian land keeping thousands of Palestinians as prisoners and in every way threaten the lives of the Palestinians?

34. If the Palestinians must cease their ineffective attempts to defend themselves, the Israelis must evacuate Palestinian land and allow the return of Palestinian refugees. Then only would it be right to demand that Palestinians do nothing to retaliate against Israeli aggression.

35. The world must insist on these. The war will not stop otherwise. Today not even the mightiest military power can conquer countries. The authorities or the Governments of the countries concerned may surrender but the people will not. They will continue to fight by whatever means possible until their country is fully liberated.

36. We saw this in Vietnam, in Somalia, in Afghanistan, in Iraq. The only war the US won was in tiny Grenada. Shock and awe will get the military powers nowhere. When people are determined to get back their land they will continue to fight until they achieve their honorable objective.

37. The big powers must realise this. Your weapons of mass destruction your sophistication in inventing new killing machines will avail you of nothing. A hundred years ago you may conquer and colonise. But not any more. You cannot crush the spirit of the people and the love of their land. They will fight if it takes a thousand years.

38. If there is to be peace in this world, if it is going to be freed of acts of terror by irregulars and regulars, stop thinking that force and the killing of people will solve the conflicts between people.

39. If the world is to see peace in Palestine and the Middle-East and indeed the whole world, take no sides in the Palestinian conflict. Only justice based on historical facts will put an end to the Palestinian issue peacefully. Until then the

world will continue to see endless violence and war in the Middle-East and Palestine.

40. The onus is on the big powers that created Israel, the time bomb par excellence, which will not stop exploding in the face of the world until justice is done.

41. This is not a religious war. The Jews have been living in Muslim land for centuries. In fact they seek refuge in Muslim land from the oppressions and pogroms of the Europeans. But if the Jews reward their Arab hosts by seizing their land then they and their European invaders will have to pay the price.

42. The tragedy of Gaza will be repeated again and again. But those who think that the Palestinian will be cowed into submission are mistaken. For every Gazan killed many will replace them.

43. War will solve nothing for the militarists. Only justice through peaceful negotiation will.
