

**SPEECH BY TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
AT THE FORUM ON GAZA GENOCIDE:
SOLUTION FOR PALESTINE LONDON ON 31 MARCH 2009**

1. As co-host I would like to welcome everyone to this forum on the Gaza Genocide and the possible solution to the Palestinian problem. This is a forum on the rights of all Palestinians regardless of political affiliations. The internal politics of the Palestinian people is for them alone to resolve. Their humanitarian rights are the concern of the whole human race.

2. I know that many forums have been held recently and more will be held in the future concerning the injustice to and the sufferings of the Palestinian people under the brutal Israeli armed attacks and occupation over the last sixty years.

3. The recent wanton slaughter of innocent men, women and children in Gaza by Israel's military, supported principally by the United States, Britain and the European Union is another sordid example of the brutality of the strong against the weak and illustrates also the double standards, hypocrisy and the failure by the international community to condemn the crimes committed by the most powerful military power in the Middle-East against the long suffering defenceless Palestinians.

4. Since the holocaust no one can criticise Israel without being labelled "anti-semitic" or "anti-Jew". To avoid such an accusation, I would like to invite you to consider an independent evaluation of the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding before us by a Jew.

5. I refer to the statements of the U.N. special rapporteur for human rights in occupied Palestinian territory, former Princeton University law professor Richard Falk, who is a Jew.

6. He has unreservedly called the devastation of Gaza "a crime against humanity" and "a flagrant and massive violation of international humanitarian law as laid down in Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention." He has even called for "the International Criminal Court to investigate the situation, and determine whether the Israeli civilian leaders and military commanders responsible for the Gaza siege should be indicted and prosecuted for violations of international criminal law."

7. While also condemning the actions of Hamas, Prof. Falk said that it cannot be cited as a justification for Israel's "imposition of a collective punishment of a life-and-health threatening character on the people of Gaza, and should not distract the U.N. or international society from discharging their fundamental moral and legal duty to render protection to the Palestinian people. A recent study

reports that 46 percent of all Gazan children suffer from acute anemia. There are reports that the sonic booms associated with Israeli over-flights have caused widespread deafness, especially among children. Gazan children need thousands of hearing aids. Malnutrition is extremely high in a number of different dimensions and affects 75 percent of Gazans. There are widespread mental disorders, especially among young people without the will to live. Over 50 percent of Gazan children under the age of 12 have been found to have no will to live."

8. This independent observation by a Jew should be enough to arouse our conscience, at the minimum to demand that all the relevant parties responsible for this despicable acts must be made accountable and brought before a special tribunal to answer for war crimes charges.

9. If the words of Mr Falk a Jew and a United Nations rapporteur are not enough, let me quote a report by AFP, headed "Israeli soldiers describe wanton killings of civilians".

10. Datelined Jerusalem: the report said Israeli soldiers have described wanton killings of Palestinian civilians and destruction of property during the deadly 22-day Gaza Offensive, according to a journal published yesterday.

11. One soldier described the case of an Israeli sharpshooter who killed a Palestinian mother and her two children who had left their home on a path the troops had declared off limits, according to the journal of the Yitzhak Rabin pre-military academy.

12. The publication which quoted graduates of the colleges military preparation course, also cited the case of an elderly Palestinian woman killed as she was walking 100 meters from her home.

13. Soldiers also spoke of civilians being abused, acts of vandalism, of destruction of homes. – AFP.

14. There can be no more doubt of the brutality of the Israeli military in Gaza.

15. It is therefore most appropriate that this forum in London should deal with the injustice against the Palestinians which has its origins in Britain.

THE BALFOUR DECLARATION

16. We have short memories, and over the years the original perpetrators of this cruel injustice have been forgotten.

17. It is time that we revisit the history relating to the founding of Israel in 1948.

18. But before I do so may I remind everyone of the fundamental tenets of the English Common Law which says that: "Justice Must Not Only Be Done, It Must Be Seen To Be Done."

19. How often has this been quoted and preached especially here in Britain. But has it always been upheld?

20. The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, which followed World War II, called the waging of aggressive war and I quote, "essentially an evil thing... to initiate a war of aggression... is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."

21. For centuries, Jews were much maligned in Europe and were persecuted viciously but strangely they had always found comfort and safe havens in Muslim countries.

22. Even Shakespeare caricatured the Jews in The Merchant of Venice in which Shylock, the vengeful money-lender came to be accepted as representative of the Jewish character. There is no such stories in the Muslim world.

23. But Shakespeare's countrymen eventually decided to accept the Jews to the point when a Jew became the Prime Minister of England. The turnaround was complete when in 1917, the then British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour wrote the following letter to Lord Rothschild:

Foreign Office
November 2nd 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild:

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

His majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours,
Arthur James Balfour

(Emphasis added)

24. This infamous letter is now more commonly referred to as the Balfour Declaration.

25. From this Declaration, several facts are not and cannot be disputed as they have been expressly admitted by the then British Cabinet:

- 1) The entire land was known and recognised as Palestine;
- 2) There was already in existence in Palestine, non-Jewish communities. In fact they made up the majority;
- 3) It was the British Cabinet that approved the concept of a “national home” for the Jewish people and not the non-Jewish communities in Palestine who were not consulted;
- 4) Notwithstanding that Jews have been living in other countries, and have accrued political status and rights, the British Government deemed it fit and unilaterally decided that a Jewish national homeland be established in Palestine;
- 5) The letter was not addressed to a Head of State or a government but a representative of a mere organisation, the Zionist Federation.

26. I have stated earlier that Jews have been persecuted by the Europeans for centuries. Injustice had been inflicted upon the Jewish people.

27. But can such injustice be compensated by another injustice inflicted on another community, a community which had historically provided asylum for the persecuted Jews?

28. It does not look like Justice is being done.

29. On the contrary, Injustice has been done and worse still has been done blatantly in full view of the world. Equally blatantly the injustice is forcefully upheld, and insisted upon by the very people, the British, who had talked so much about justice and fair play.

30. In simple language, Palestine was stolen from the “non-Jewish communities” in Palestine and given to the minority Jewish community exclusively, to assuage the conscience of the Europeans. Despite British promise of the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities, these people were violently expelled from Palestine and forced to live in exile for the last 60 years with no right of return.

31. Can we accept that this is the way for the Europeans to atone for their sins against the Jewish people?

32. The concept of mandated territory was proposed by the victors in the First World War. The understanding was that when the time came for the mandate to end, the original people of the territory would regain their land. There was no provision for the holders of this mandate to do just what they like to the territory concerned.

33. But it was the British who proposed that the mandated territory of Palestine be established as a national home of the Jewish people and not to the people indigenous to the territory.

34. It was an ill-thought out decision for the British Government must know that taking other people's land to give to other people is wrong, very wrong. They must know it would lead to violence. They must know that even when they occupied their colonial territories, they had been forced to give them up to the indigenous people.

35. Palestine was not a piece of real estate owned by Lord Balfour or the British Government, to be given away at their whims and fancy!

36. There is no legal basis whatsoever, be it in English Common Law or the existing international laws for this act.

37. It was expropriation without parallel in history! What would the British people think if Surrey in England were to be offered by France or America as a homeland for the Jews, the Kurds or the Tamils of Sri Lanka and the people of Surrey be expelled.

38. Chaim Weizman, was very clear as to the objective of the Zionist Federation. He said and I quote:

39. "By a Jewish National Home, I mean the creation of such conditions that as a country is developed, we can pour in a considerable number of immigrants and finally establish such a society in Palestine that Palestine shall be Jewish as England is English, or America, American."¹

(Emphasis Added)

40. In fact, it is very obvious that the establishment of Israel is nothing short of seizing native land from the native people in order to give to the aliens in all but name. This has been admitted by David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel who said, I quote

41. "There is no chance of an understanding with the Arabs unless we first reach an understanding with the English, by which we will become the preponderant force in Palestine. What can drive the Arabs to a mutual

understanding with us? Facts ... only after we manage to establish a great Jewish fact in this country. Only then will the precondition for discussion be met.”²

42. Obviously a Jewish fact did not exist before. There was only a Jewish minority. They had to artificially create this fact.

43. Israel Zangwill, a prominent Zionist was more blunt in expressing the intentions of the Zionist Federation. He said and I quote:

44. “We must be prepared either to drive out by sword the Arab tribes in possession as our fathers land or to grapple with the problem of a large alien population, mostly Mohammedans and accustomed for centuries to despise us...”³

45. “If we wish to give a country to a people without a country, it is utter foolishness to allow it to be a country of two peoples. This can only cause trouble. The Jews will suffer and so will their neighbours. One of the two: a different place must be found either for the Jews or for their neighbours.”⁴

(Emphasis Added)

46. You may want to remind yourself that as a country with one people (Jews) the trouble that it has caused is horrendous. Ever since the country with one people was created there has been endless violence, conflicts and wars including the destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York and the acts of terrorism.

47. Lest I am accused of spreading the perception that all Jews hold the above views, let me say that there are many Jews who have condemned Zionism and the creation of Israel. In a letter dated September 21, 2003 to President George W. Bush, Torah True Jews Inc. wrote:

48. “... the ideology of Zionism is in utter opposition to our religion. We have been enjoined to be scrupulously loyal to the countries we reside in, and never seek to undertake to establish independent sovereignty in the Holy Land or anywhere throughout the world”⁵ unquote.

49. I urge the leaders of the Muslim community to acquaint itself with such forthright leaders of the Jewish community.

50. It would be remiss of me, not to mention the courageous work of Rabbi Cohen who has been spreading a similar message for and on behalf of Neturei Karta.

51. I would like to quote Rabbi Cohen’s speech given on the occasion of the Conference – “The Palestinian People’s Right of Return to their Homeland”, in Beirut, Lebanon from the 23rd to 25th February 2005.

52. Rabbi Cohen said, "I bring you today a short simple message from Orthodox Jewry. Zionism and Judaism are total opposites, incompatible and diametrically opposed. Zionists can in no way represent Jewry. Anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism. It is in the light of this statement that I wish to put over to you today the Orthodox Jewish approach to the question of the 'Right of Return for the Palestinians'.

53. "Firstly, what is an orthodox Jew? An Orthodox Jew is a Jew who endeavours to live his life completely in accordance with the Jewish religion. The Jewish Religion absolutely forbids Zionism both on grounds of religious belief and on grounds of Jewish Religious values of humanitarianism as I hope to explain. This of course has a tremendous impact on the subject of this conference namely 'The Palestinian People's Right of Return'.

54. Rabbi Cohen continued, "Even if you see and hear on the media what appears to be Orthodox Jews supporting Zionism, rest assured, as I will explain, their approach is an aberration and a distortion of Judaism, an absolute departure from the teaching that has been handed down to us through the generations.

55. "Zionism has the ideal, and has always had the ideal, of imposing - let's face it - a 'sectarian' State over the heads of the Palestinians, the indigenous population. This has resulted in a terrible confrontation; a confrontation which has cost many lives both Palestinian and Jewish with no end in sight unless there is a very radical change."

56. When I read these words of Rabbi Cohen, my faith in humanity in ensuring that Justice for the Palestinians will not only be done, but will be seen to be done, is reinforced.

57. There is indeed hope for the future.

58. There is hope for the Jews and the Palestinians to live in peace in the Holy Land, as indeed they had done for centuries before the creation of Israel.

59. There is hope that the three Abrahamic Faiths will co-exist in peace, so that the message of our one true God will bring joy and blessings not only for the present generation but to our children and their children too.

60. This surely must be the Justice that we should strive for.

61. The Jews and the Arabs are great people who have contributed much to humanity and civilisation. And both have suffered so much from colonialism and persecution through the ages.

62. Yet, today we see merciless wars being waged and wanton destruction inflicted on both sides.

63. The fog of wars has blurred our vision and our ability to grasp the fundamental truth that only in peace, will we find justice.

64. There cannot be justice when men, women and children are massacred with impunity, massacred legitimately.

65. There cannot be justice, when mothers and children are starving.

66. There cannot be justice, when children are denied their basic right to education and to realise their fullest potential.

67. There cannot be justice when there is no hope for a better future.

68. The Preamble to the UNESCO constitution states:

69. "... wars begin in the minds of human beings, it is in the minds of human beings that the defenses for peace should be built."

70. But, instead of building defences, society has allowed and tolerated the young, our children, to be brainwashed for war, and more often than not, in the name of democracy and freedom.

71. The barbaric invasion of Iraq was grounded on the so-called irrefutable intelligence that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and he was ready to unleash wanton destruction within 45 minutes and devastate Britain as alleged by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair and asserted in the "sexed-up intelligence dossier" headlined in leading British Tabloids and the BBC.

72. When the lie was exposed, President Bush and Prime Minister Blair justified further killings because tyrants needed to be overthrown for democracy and freedom to prevail!

73. Hamas was elected as the government for Palestine in place of Fatah in a fair and free election, but such an exercise in democracy cannot be tolerated because in the eyes of the United States, Britain, the European Union and Israel, an independent and sovereign government would not serve the interests of occupying powers.

74. The Palestinians in Gaza must therefore be collectively punished for committing the ultimate crime as defined by the Zionists and their allies – to elect a government of their choice and not that of Zionist Israel!

75. The punishment was massive and prolonged, starting with the blockade and deliberate starvation of the entire population of Gaza. When the war criminals felt sufficiently confident that the Palestinians would no longer be able to resist, they launched a bloody invasion to terrorise the people of Gaza into submission.

76. But the heroic Palestinians, uniting as one, put paid to these evil plans and persevered in defending themselves. There was no surrender despite the killings of their women and children.

77. The fate of the Gazan struck at the hearts of decent people everywhere and many risked their lives to go the aid of the Palestinians.

78. I am proud to have with us this morning in London, the Rt Hon Cynthia Mckinney, former member of the US Congress and lately, Presidential Candidate for the Green Party who together with the founders and members of the Free Gaza Movement braved stormy seas and Israeli gunboats to bring food and aid to the starving Gazans.

79. In one of these efforts, in which Cynthia was a participant, Israeli gunboats rammed her boat, knowing full well that she and her friends were on a humanitarian mission to save lives. She survived this ordeal and no doubt, later in the morning she will tell us her trials and tribulations in overcoming this ordeal.

80. Ladies and gentlemen, we must salute this courageous and indomitable lady fighter for justice and freedom.

81. A few weeks ago, another courageous man took up the challenge and led a convoy of over one hundred trucks to bring aid to Gaza and broke through the Rafah Checkpoint. The convoy traveled overland from UK to Gaza, a distance of over 20,000 kilometers.

82. He exemplifies the best qualities of the British.

83. In 2005, he joined us in Malaysia to launch the Kuala Lumpur Declaration to Criminalise War. He spoke with passion against war and crimes against humanity.

84. I missed his presence today, as he could not be with us. Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in saluting the Hon. George Galloway. He is now banned from entering Canada.

85. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Rt. Hon. Tony Benn for joining us today. He has been and continues to be a staunch advocate for peace and justice for the Palestinians.

86. But we must look beyond such courageous efforts to help bring lasting peace to the Holy Land of Palestine.

THE LONDON DECLARATION FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN PALESTINE

87. Where and how do we begin?

88. Revisiting the Balfour Declaration is as good a beginning as any.

89. For it was in 1917, in London that this atrocious injustice was first conceived and therefore it is only right and proper that the Balfour Declaration be replaced with another declaration of intent here in London to be called - The London Declaration for Peace and Justice in Palestine.

90. The British people must atone for this injustice and the horrors that followed by ensuring that the British Parliament unanimously adopt such a declaration of intent and ensure that the international community implements its basic principles.

91. The detractors will say that such a proposal will never see the light of day.

92. But, I am convinced that there are enough men of goodwill here and elsewhere to ensure that it will.

93. For the last 60 years, we have been talking and debating about the crime, but not identifying the principal party that committed the crime.

94. If justice must be done and seen to be done, at the very least, the British Parliament, representing the entire British people must confront this injustice, as the Germans and Germany since World War II were made to confront the injustice and crimes committed against the Jews.

95. There cannot be double standard, nor can there be justice if the victors are allowed to lay down the law.

96. For too long have the British escaped the censure that they deserve.

97. Tony Blair has been appointed the Peace Envoy for the Quartet. When a known warmonger who told lies is appointed Envoy of Peace, it is cynicism at its worse.

98. Any effort to establish peace in Palestine must, if we are sincere, begin with the abrogation of the Balfour Declaration.

99. Just as Holocaust Memorials have been erected in Germany, America and other countries to remind present and future generations of the injustice committed against the Jews, the ultimate and lasting memorial to the injustice

inflicted on the Palestinians must be the total rejection of the Balfour Declaration. The British people and their Parliament must do this.

100. As William Wilberforce did with the slave trade, so must the members of the British Parliament redeem their honour by abrogating the Balfour Declaration.

101. There can be no peace without admission of guilt and contrition by the culprit. Then, and then only will there be atonement for the grievous wrong which has wreaked havoc and death in the Middle East and elsewhere over the past 60 years.

102. Any British effort to promote peace in the Holy Land will ring hollow when its leaders have not owned up to the betrayal of the Palestinians.

103. Rightly, the Palestinians should be demanding retribution. But they are not.

104. They are only seeking justice.

105. If we are asked for a precedent, I need look no further than the courageous reconciliation that was fostered in what was once White Supremacist South Africa!

106. For generations, it was unthinkable and even a taboo to consider that the Africans were capable of governing themselves and to live in peace with their white fellow citizens.

107. Every rationale and excuse was given to justify the Apartheid regime and the inevitable injustice.

108. But the far-sighted leaders of South Africa, especially the courageous Nelson Mandela and de Clerk, banished hatred and vengeance from their hearts, so that reconciliation and human decency could prevail, and today black and white live, work and play together.

109. We meet here in London where the decision was made which we now know is wrong, a decision that had plunged the Middle East and indeed the world into 60 years of war, of senseless killings and material destruction, of the tragedy of 9/11, the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and of Gaza.

110. We can help redeem all this if our meeting can come up with a proposal for a solution to the Palestinian tragedy. We cannot bring back the dead but we can prevent more deaths. And we can do this if we resolve here and now to bring the two parties together to discuss and to negotiate so as to return to the status quo ante, i.e. the recreation of a state where Arabs and Jews can live together in peace and at least relative harmony.

111. I propose this because this was the solution for my own country, Malaysia, where the Malays agreed to share their country with the Chinese and Indians whose forebears migrated to our shores and decided to settle down there. They retain their ethnicity but they are all Malaysians.

112. It will be a difficult task for Jews and Arabs but God willing they will triumph in the end.

113. I thank you all for your presence.

114. Let our enlightenment and understanding be not in vain.

¹ Nur Masalha, citing "The Address to the English Zionist Federation" 1919, Jewish Chronicle. May 20 1921, in Arie Bober, ed: *The Other Israel* (1972, New York Garden City, Double Day)

² Nur Masalha, citing Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive Meeting on June 7, 1938 in Jerusalem, Vol 28, No 51, Central Zionist Archives. See also Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, at p24.

³ Nur Masalha, citing Israel Zangwill, *Speeches, Articles and Letters* (1937, London, The Soncino Press)

⁴ Nur Masalha, citing Yosef Grony, *Zionism and the Arabs: 1882-1948* (1987, Oxford Clarendon Press)

⁵ See, *Washington Post*, October 5, 2003 See also www.jewsagainstzionism.com