



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR RAPULANE MOLEKANE**

**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED  
NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN VIENNA,  
AUSTRIA**

**AT THE OCCASION OF THE**

**THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

**10 DECEMBER 2020**

**Chairperson; Executive Director of the United Nations Office in Vienna, Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly;**  
**Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in Vienna;**  
**H.E. Mr. Salahaldin Abdalshafi,**  
**Representative of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People;**

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

On behalf of the Government and the People of the Republic of South Africa, allow me Chair to express our sincere condolences on the untimely passing of our great friend, Dr Saeeb Erekat, whose immense contribution to the liberation of Palestine is immeasurable. We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by His Excellency Ambassador Mohamed Mezghani, Chair of the African Group. Equally Chair, I take this opportunity to join consensus on the statement delivered by the Chair of the Vienna Chapter of the Non-Aligned Movement, His Excellency Ambassador Galib Israfilov in expressing the Group's denouncement of the continued plight of the Palestinian people in their quest for self-determination. This 43<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the Declaration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people remains central to South Africa's foreign policy commitment to the people of Palestine. We therefore reiterate our firm support for their inalienable right to self-determination, self-governance and independence.

It is critical Chair to reiterate South Africa's consistent position which calls for an independent Palestine living side by side with its neighbours in line with internationally recognized borders with East Jerusalem as its capital in the interest of peace and prosperity for all. In our rejection of unilateralism; we will continue to support the United Nations Resolutions, international law, and internationally agreed parameters for the achievement of this noble revolutionary objective.

**Chairperson,**

South Africa would like to underscore that the 43<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the Declaration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people comes at a time when the world is faced with the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic does not distinguish between peoples, countries, religions, nor does it recognise conflicts. It does not observe accords, settlements, ceasefires nor resolutions, forcing the world to realise the vital importance of the values of cooperation, collaboration, openness, good faith and the genuine need to resolve disagreements in a peaceful manner for the benefit of all. If this epidemic is bad for the world, it must be worse for the people of Palestine whose access to medical supplies is being severely affected by unilateral coercive measures undertaken by certain states.

We also need to be reminded Chair by the words of Nelson Mandela when he once said South Africa shall not be free until the people of Palestine are free.

Chair, as the world commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), we are disappointed that hold our heads in shame that Palestinian Women continue to suffer under the yoke of Israel occupation, dispossession displacement, live in exile, martyred and imprisonment.

**Chairperson,**

South Africa will continue to support the General Assembly Resolutions 67/19 and 71/20 as well as the agreements emanating from the Madrid Conference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet roadmap aimed at the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.

It is of utmost importance that the international community remains focused on the objective of ensuring peaceful co-existence between Palestinian and Israeli people, consistent with the two-State solution. A fully-fledged, sovereign and independent Palestinian State, free and in charge of its own development and destiny, is critical for its people, but also for the region of the Middle East and the world at large.

It is in this context that South Africa remains extremely concerned with Israel's military occupation of Palestinian territories, its aggression, and continuous construction and expansion of settlements. South Africa condemns these actions, as well as the recent demolition of the village of Khirbet Humsa in the Jordan Valley, the largest forced displacement incident in over four years. These acts are illegal and inhumane, and we call on the Government of Israel to stop these demolitions immediately, especially in light of the humanitarian impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We call on Israel to immediately cease these illegal activities and also withdraw from all the Palestinian territories, and release unconditionally all political prisoners held without charge in their jails.

We are extremely troubled by the already deteriorating humanitarian situation which has been exacerbated by the devastating COVID 19 pandemic in Palestine, internal displacements, economic hardships and the fate of its refugees. In this regard, we continue to commend the United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) for its gallant work in continuing to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees in the diaspora over the decades, despite many obstacles and pressure, including withdrawal of material support by some.

### **Chairperson**

South Africa fully supports the idea presented by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to hold an international peace conference with the participation of all concerned parties for discussions on a genuine peace process, including the resolution of all final status issues in early 2021.

In conclusion, Chair, I express the support of the Government and the people of South Africa to the noble cause of the Palestinian people.

I thank you