

Letter from President Hugo Chavez to the Secretary General of the United Nations supporting recognition of Palestinian State

by Hugo Chávez Frías

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His Excellency, Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations

Mr. Secretary General:

Distinguished representatives of the peoples of the world:

I address these words to the United Nations General Assembly, to this great forum that represents all the people of earth, to ratify, on this day and in this setting, Venezuela's full support of the recognition of the Palestinian State: of Palestine's right to become a free, sovereign and independent state. This

represents an act of historic justice towards a people who carry with them, from time immemorial, all the pain and suffering of the world.

In his memorable essay *The Grandeur of Arafat*, the great French philosopher Gilles Deleuze wrote with the full weight of the truth: The Palestinian cause is first and foremost the set of injustices that these people have suffered and continue to suffer. And I dare add that the Palestinian cause also represents a constant and unwavering will to resist, already written in the historic memory of the human condition. A will to resist that is born of the most profound love for the earth. Mahmoud Darwish, the infinite voice of the longed-for Palestine, with heartfelt conscience speaks about this love: We don't need memories/ because we carry within us Mount Carmelo/ and in our eyelids is the herb of Galilee./ Don't say: If only we could flow to my country like a river!/ Don't say that!/ Because we are in the flesh of our country/ and our country is in our flesh.

Against those who falsely assert that what has happened to the Palestinian people is not genocide, Deleuze himself states with unfaltering lucidity: From beginning to end, it involved acting as if the Palestinian people not only must not exist, but had never existed. It represents the very essence of genocide: to decree that a people do not exist; to deny them the right to existence.

In this regard, the great Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo is quite right when he forcefully states: The biblical promise of the land of Judea and Samaria to the tribes of Israel is not a notarized property contract that authorizes the eviction of those who were born and live on that land. This is precisely why conflict resolution in the Middle East must, necessarily, bring justice to the Palestinian people; this is the only path to peace.

It is upsetting and painful that the same people who suffered one of the worst examples of genocide in history have become the executioners of the Palestinian people: it is upsetting and painful that the heritage of the Holocaust be the Nakba. And it is truly disturbing that Zionism continues to use the charge of anti-Semitism as blackmail against those who oppose their violations and crimes. Israel has, blatantly and despicably, used and continues to use the memory of the victims. And they do so to act with complete impunity against Palestine. It's worth mentioning that anti-Semitism is a Western, European, scourge in which the Arabs do not participate. Furthermore, let's not forget that it is the Semite Palestine people who suffer from the ethnic cleansing practiced by the Israeli colonialist State.

I want to make myself clear: It is one thing to denounce anti-Semitism, and an entirely different thing to passively accept that Zionist barbarism enforces an apartheid regime against the Palestinian people. From an ethical standpoint those who denounce the first, must condemn the second.

A necessary digression: it is frankly abusive to confuse Zionism with Judaism. Throughout time we have been reminded of this by several Jewish intellectuals such as Albert Einstein and Erich Fromm. And today there are an ever increasing number of conscientious citizens, within Israel itself, who openly oppose Zionism and its criminal and terrorist practices.

We must spell it out: Zionism, as a world vision, is absolutely racist. Irrefutable proof of this can be seen in these words written with terrifying cynicism by Golda Meir: How are we to return the occupied territories? There is nobody to return them to. There is no such thing as a Palestinian people. It is not as people think, that there existed a people called Palestinians, who considered themselves as Palestinians, and that we came and threw them out and took their country. They didn't exist."

It is important to remember that: from the end of the 19th century, Zionism called for the return of the Jewish people to Palestine and the creation of a national state of its own. This approach was beneficial for French and British colonialism, as it would later be for Yankee imperialism. The West has always encouraged and supported the Zionist occupation of Palestine by military means.

Read and reread the document historically known as the Balfour Declaration of 1917: the British Government assumed the legal authority to promise a national home in Palestine to the Jewish people, deliberately ignoring the presence and wishes of its inhabitants. It should be added that Christians and Muslims lived in peace for centuries in the Holy Land up until the time when Zionism began to claim it as its complete and exclusive property.

Let's not forget that beginning in the second decade of the 20th century, Zionism started to develop its expansionist plans by taking advantage of the colonial British occupation of Palestine. By the end of World War II, the Palestinian people's tragedy worsened, with their expulsion from their territory and, at the same time, from history. In 1947, the despicable and illegal UN resolution 181 recommends dividing Palestine into a Jewish State, an Arab State, and an area under international control (Jerusalem and Belem). Shamefully, 56 percent of the territory was granted to Zionism to establish its State. In fact, this resolution violated international law and blatantly ignored the will of the vast Arab majority: the right to self-determination of the people became a dead letter.

From 1948 to date, the Zionist State has continually applied its criminal strategy against the Palestinian people with the constant support of its unconditional ally, the United States of America. This unconditional allegiance is clearly observed by the

fact that Israel directs and sets US international policy for the Middle East. That's why the great Palestinian and universal conscience Edward Said stated that any peace agreement built on the alliance with the United States would be an alliance that confirms Zionist power, rather than one that confronts it.

Now then: contrary to what Israel and the United States are trying to make the world believe through transnational media outlets, what happened and continues to happen in Palestine — using Said's words— is not a religious conflict, but a political conflict, with a colonial and imperialist stamp. It did not begin in the Middle East, but rather in Europe.

What was and continues to be at the heart of the conflict?: debate and discussion has prioritized Israel's security while ignoring Palestine's. This is corroborated by recent events; a good example is the latest act of genocide set off by Israel during its Operation Molten Lead in Gaza.

Palestine's security cannot be reduced to the simple acknowledgement of a limited self-government and self-policing in its "enclaves" along the west bank of the Jordan and in the Gaza Strip. This ignores the creation of the Palestinian State, in the borders set prior to 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital; and the rights of its citizens and their self-determination as a people. This further disregards the compensation and subsequent return to the Homeland of 50 percent of the Palestinian people who are scattered all over the world, as established by resolution 194.

It's unbelievable that a country (Israel) that owes its existence to a general assembly resolution could be so disdainful of the resolutions that emanate from the UN, said Father Miguel D'Escoto when pleading for the end of the massacre against the people of Gaza in late 2008 and early 2009.

Mr. Secretary General and distinguished representatives of the peoples of the world:

It is impossible to ignore the crisis in the United Nations. In 2005, before this very same General Assembly, we argued that the United Nations model had become exhausted. The fact that the debate on the Palestinian issue has been delayed and is being openly sabotaged reconfirms this.

For several days, Washington has been stating that, at the Security Council, it will veto what will be a majority resolution of the General Assembly: the recognition of Palestine as a full member of the UN. In the Statement of Recognition of the Palestinian State, Venezuela, together with the sister Nations that make up the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), have denounced that such a just aspiration could be blocked by this means. As we know, the empire, in this and other instances, is trying to impose its double standard on the world stage: Yankee double standards are violating international law in Libya, while allowing Israel to do whatever it pleases, thus becoming the main accomplice of the Palestinian genocide being carried out by the hands of Zionist barbarity. Edward Said touched a nerve when he wrote that: Israeli interests in the United States have made the US' Middle East policy Israeli-centric.

I would like to conclude with the voice of Mahmoud Darwish in his memorable poem *On This Earth*: We have on this earth what makes life worth living: On this earth, the lady of earth, Mother of all beginnings/ Mother of all ends. She was called... Palestine./ Her name later became... Palestine./ My Lady, because you are my Lady, I deserve life.

It will continue to be called Palestine: Palestine will live and overcome! Long-live free, sovereign and independent Palestine!

President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Hugo Chávez Frías

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