

5 June 2017

Statement of the Secretary-General on the occasion of the anniversary of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the 50 years of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory

Today marks 50 years since the start of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Syrians.

This occupation has imposed a heavy humanitarian and development burden on the Palestinian people. Among them are generation after generation of Palestinians who have been compelled to grow-up and live in ever more crowded refugee camps, many in abject poverty, and with little or no prospect of a better life for their children.

The occupation has shaped the lives of both Palestinians and Israelis. It has fuelled recurring cycles of violence and retribution. Its perpetuation is sending an unmistakable message to generations of Palestinians that their dream of statehood is destined to remain just that, a dream; and to Israelis that their desire for peace, security and regional recognition remains unattainable.

Ending the occupation that began in 1967 and achieving a negotiated two-state outcome is the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace that meets Israeli security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty. It is the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Now is not the time to give up on this goal. Continued settlement construction and expansion; violence and incitement; and the illicit arms build-up and militant activity in Gaza risk creating a one-state reality that is incompatible with realizing the legitimate national and historic aspirations of both peoples.

Now is the time to return to direct negotiations to resolve all final status issues on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, agreements and international law.

Now is the time to end the conflict by establishing an independent Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.

Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will remove a driver of violent extremism and terrorism in the Middle East and open the doors to cooperation, security, prosperity and human rights for all.

In 1947, on the basis of UN General Assembly Resolution 181, the world recognized the two-state solution and called for the emergence of "independent Arab and Jewish states".

On 14 May 1948, the State of Israel was born.

Almost seven decades later, the world still awaits the birth of an independent Palestinian state.

The Secretary-General reiterates his offer to work with all relevant stakeholders to support a genuine peace process.

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