



# Statement on Palestine

25 November 2023

## A Call for Palestinian Justice based on the South African Experience

### Global Awakening

Humanity has reached a low point with the prolonged denial of justice for Palestinians and the continuous brutal occupation of their lands culminating in the current shameful atrocities and genocide being carried out by Israel.

As dire as the situation is, there is hope in the fact that large numbers of people all over the world are raising their voices for a ceasefire which ought to be an enduring one that leads to a just resolution and everlasting peace.

This global awakening regarding the plight of the Palestinian people has triggered a deep reflection about the state of humanity and the need to construct a more representative and humane world. The normalisation of war, hyper militarism, violence, hate mongering, intolerance, oppression and fascist behaviour wherever it manifests across the globe has to end. A safe and secure world has to be created for everyone. This can be attained if the colonial tendencies and ambitions that many nations have for power, control and supremacy at all costs are extinguished and there is a shift to global human solidarity and cooperation where the conditions for all nations and people to enjoy equal rights, dignity and prosperity are enabled.

### Hope for Solving the Palestinian Question

In this context there can be hope for a viable and sustainable solution to the Palestinian question through a genuine negotiated settlement on the basis of justice, dignity and equal respect for all human life. The alternative is continuous military operations, violence, loss of life, and further escalated destruction of property, infrastructure and economy that will be perpetually destabilising and destructive to the region and to the global economy. Africa in particular will remain impacted and is in dire need of breaking out of the historic colonial hegemony and exploitative trade relations and fluctuations.

*The South African example* of defeating apartheid and building a democratic society can be drawn upon and ought to be a key focus to overcome the problem of Israeli apartheid, occupation and expansionist ambitions.

South Africa has taken a natural and dignified stance by condemning the genocidal actions of the Israeli government and by intensifying its solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The South African government took a decision to refer the current genocidal actions of the Israeli government to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and to close down the Israeli embassy in the face of a very strong and influential Zionist grouping within the country which has significant economic resources. The stance of Zionists in South Africa on the atrocities in Palestine is astounding when one considers that they ought to have an appreciation of the moral basis upon which the struggle against apartheid and oppression was waged in South Africa. Whilst enjoying the privileges of living in South Africa it is reprehensible how they pledge allegiance to another country and even illegally send their children to fight in the Israeli army as accomplices in maintaining apartheid and committing genocide.

The decision of the South African government is based on, one, a moral clarity borne out of South Africa's own experience in facing and overcoming violent state oppression, racism and apartheid, and two, a necessity to ensure that there is accountability for Israeli actions that have proceeded with impunity and in violation of International Law and UN resolutions for a ridiculously long time. In the context of striving for global order and harmony, no country should be a law unto themselves as stated by President Ramaphosa.

The South African government's actions reflect what the majority of South Africans have called for and who would have liked for it to have happened much earlier. It also reflects the solidarity with the vast mass of people across the globe who want a ceasefire and a just solution that is aimed at addressing the root cause of the cycle of violence which has endured over generations.

## **Palestinian Unity**

There seems to be a precondition that is being placed by some countries, analysts and media in line with the fallacious Israeli logic that any negotiated settlement can only be initiated once the resistance forces, or rather Hamas, is removed from the equation or that any settlement ought to exclude Hamas. This approach must be rejected entirely by the international community for two reasons. First, the South African experience in attaining a negotiated settlement points to a need for a fully inclusive process and second, the rejection of Hamas is misplaced.

The intensification of Israeli aggression in the build-up to the resistance action taken on October 7<sup>th</sup> 2023 and the outrageous and inhumane response by deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure including hospitals on an industrial scale form part of the current dynamics which, it must be insisted, has to and can only be seen within the broader context of illegal and ongoing and deepening occupation.

Any insistence to the contrary, and any justification to commit “war” crimes and genocide in the name of self-defence by Israel as an occupying state can only be rejected as completely absurd and counter-productive to any genuine attempts at justice and peace. Similarly, any focus and insistence on calling for condemnation and eradication of Hamas, which is seen by Palestinians as a part of their legitimate resistance structures, as a prerequisite to move forward towards peace is not realistic nor justifiable. Any actions that Hamas undertook on October 7<sup>th</sup> should be subjected to the standards of international law and due process. All role players must be held accountable within a framework of justice and by fair and objective arbiters. Such a framework must account for the obligations that Israel has as a state and an occupying force, and the rights that Palestinians have to resist occupation in the context of a brutal and inhumane siege on Gaza that has lasted for close to two decades.

### **Inclusive Dialogue and Negotiations**

Justice for Palestine can advance a better world. It can expedite stability in the middle-east region and assist the world to pivot away completely from colonialism towards a multi-polar global order that is more equitable and inclusive. It can generate the peace and stability that is required for multiple nations in the middle east and the Global South to trade freely and prosper. This is the “normalisation” that the world needs especially Africa and other developing nations - one that is free of the baggage of colonialism and apartheid and that is embracing of fair trade, diversity and multilateralism.

Based on the South African experience, justice for Palestine can only be attained if there is commitment to an inclusive negotiated process, that is, one that genuinely involves all the role players and that is aimed at genuinely finding solutions. It cannot be undertaken within a colonial mindset of excluding any party or by limiting the desire of the Palestinian people in terms of who they have as their representatives at the negotiating table. If anything, it should be Israel that should be making a case to be at the negotiating table.

This inclusive approach was part of the success of the South African transition experience where the conditions for negotiations were created and where an inclusive negotiation process was undertaken to envisage and enable a post-apartheid South Africa. The driving vision encapsulated in South Africa’s Constitution eventually, as an outcome of this process in 1996, was for a democratic country free of racism and all forms of discrimination, institutionalisation of political franchise - one person one vote, bill of rights and progressive realisation of universal access to basic services, health care, education, housing, economic opportunities and upliftment.

A lasting solution for a post-colonial region should be the outcome of a negotiated process that itself could lead to innovative problem solving and creative options that works in the best interest of all the people and in a context of striving towards overcoming racism, prejudice and bias where people of different races, ethnicities, cultures and religions can live and harmonise better together as they have done before for many centuries.

## Preconditions for Negotiations

In order to move towards a Negotiated Settlement the following is required and called for:

1. An immediate ceasefire.
2. An immediate cessation of hostilities.
3. Release of hostages and prisoners.
4. A trusted international peacekeeping force to oversee security of both Palestinians and Israelis during the negotiations process.
5. Immediate cessation of expansion of settlements and cessation of all hostilities between settlers and Palestinians.
6. Public education campaign and dialogues to overcome hatred, misplaced beliefs, manipulated narratives and to envisage a cohesive society.
7. UN to oversee appointment of negotiation facilitators based on recommendations from both sides.
8. A Negotiations Charter and process map containing key universal principles of human rights, non-racism, religious freedom, dignity, equal political franchise and security and protection of all citizens.
9. An inclusive process with full participation of all mandated organisations and/or parties.
10. Mechanisms for accountability and reconciliation.
11. A Negotiations monitoring framework.

Attaining peace in the region is possible through a negotiated settlement. A Just Peace and an Inclusive Settlement “from the River to the Sea” can be reached. Everyone should be rallying for this as a moral and ethical position to restore confidence and trust in humanity and in human resilience and fortitude.

South Africa must continue to be a beacon for building inclusive societies. As South Africans we know what oppression is like and we know what resistance means. We can only remain on the side of Justice. We must continue to be a voice for oppressed people across the globe as we continue to address our own challenges and need to advance better governance, socio-economic justice and development.

South Africans should continue to stand steadfastly for a Free Palestine.

*“We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians” – Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1997)*

*The Movement for a United South Africa (MUSA) is a Transformative Civil Society Movement uniting South Africans in Advancing Socio-Economic Justice and New Socio-Economic Models*

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