

**[I. HISTORIC EVENT:]**

Israel, as you celebrate today your 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I say to you:

Remember this day.

‘Sadat to the Knesset’ – some people will surely compare. History will tell if the comparison is fair and whether – like with Egypt – decades of peace will follow, or whether today will mark the **missed opportunity that Israel, its allies, and the region will regret for decades to come.**

Many will say I came before you today as the Prime Minister of a state that does not exist.

They will also say I came before you to mark the independence of your state when our state is yet to be born.

They will say that I should not have come as your state arose from the ashes of what should have been our state.

And they will be right. This is all true.

It is also true that my people, the Palestinian people, have suffered the painful consequences of history: as late victims of European colonialism, early victims of Arab nationalism, and continuous victims of the Zionist movement to create a state at the expense of our people, our land, our culture and traditions.

So I stand before you today as one face of the victim – not the faceless enemy that is conveniently feared and despised – but a real, honest, human interlocutor:

A victim seeking freedom and self-determination;

A victim who is ready to forgive; looking to the future; and longing to live a normal life.

## **[II. Identity and Recognition]**

**We are Arabs, but we are not Arabians – We are Palestinians. And this is our home: This Holy Land with all its mosques and churches and synagogues; with its long, varied, and rich and history; and its tradition of tolerance and acceptance of diversity.**

And for the last 60 years it has also given you a home – **the home of a pluralistic democracy.**

**[PLO RECOGNITION]** Twenty years ago, The PLO – the sole and legitimate representative of all Palestinians (West Bankers including Jerusalemites, Gazans, and Palestinians everywhere, including refugees) recognised Israel.

That was back in 1988. The Palestinian leadership came to terms, twenty years ago, with our loss: the loss of our land, of our destroyed villages; the tragic suffering of our refugees and the systematic dispersion of our people.

It was twenty years ago that we made the historic compromise.

**We the victims —displaced and dispossessed – gave Israel our recognition.**

And where has it led us? The greatest sacrifice we had, we gave to Israel, and **in return we received the hollow box of the ‘process of peace’.**

To ordinary Palestinians, this historical compromise is losing its credibility, because it can only be meaningful with reciprocity from the other side.

**[SETTLEMENTS]** But - Instead of reciprocity, the peace process came with an intensification of the colonisation of our land.

The expropriation of Palestinian land, the construction of Jewish settlements all over our land – these did not signal a change of course, a reciprocal move toward recognition, or a genuine desire for peace.

**Rather, these policies, which persist today, have made peace less attainable by making a viable, sovereign, and independent Palestinian state less attainable.**

### *III. Present: PEACE = END OF OCCUPATION*

**[REPRISE: PEACE PROCESS]** Over the past several months, there has been a revived sense of hope, with the Annapolis process signalling the possibility of a new course.

**Now is the time for Israel to give back – to give us Palestinians our land, our independence, our freedom.**

Today, we are denied even our most basic freedoms.

Every day an old, brutal, faceless system inflicts untold misery on Palestinian men, women and children trying to go about their daily lives.

Every day the young faces of Israeli soldiers at checkpoints across the occupied Palestinian territory witness our suffering. As accomplices to our misery, they have become corrupted by it.

How long can this go on? How long can this wound that cuts across the face of the land go on? And, why should it be allowed to continue to fester?

Neglecting the cause of the wound will only deepen it, making the conflict increasingly difficult to resolve for future generations.

Let's be honest: the solution is clear – it is right before you. Indeed, **it is in your hands:**

**This occupation has to end. A negotiated solution to our conflict ending this occupation is the only cure.**

#### **[IV. REFUGEES AND NAKBA]**

As you know, while you celebrate your 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our catastrophe – the Nakba.

So, allow me a few words on the refugees:

#### **[V. CONCLUSION]**

**[PRE-EMPT CRITICS]** All this I say to you honestly as the Prime Minister of a proud Palestinian people.

The pride of some will correctly say I should not have come before you today.

The pride of others will see that through this serious gesture I am sending an unequivocal message.

**[SOUNDBITE]** **People of Israel: the choice is before you. It is in your power to give freedom to my people, and deliver this land, this region, from violence and conflict – and lead it toward peace, prosperity and freedom for all.**

My belief in a peaceful, negotiated solution is the belief of most –but certainly not all – Palestinians. If the majority among you share this belief, if you are moved by my plea for justice and freedom – then let us work together:

End the occupation, the violence, the suffering and the humiliation.

Let us make peace and prosperity the shared future of us all.