

25 February 2009

The PLO is very proud and pleased ~~by~~^{at} the Vatican's announcement that his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI is planning to visit Palestine and make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In ~~this occasion and in perpetration~~ for the visit we would like to ~~take this opportunity to~~ present you with ~~key~~^{certain} messages that we hope will be conveyed by ~~the Holy See~~ ^{His Holiness} during the visit.

In essence, we hope that ~~His Holiness~~ ^{will} expresses support for a just peace in the Holy Land and the region, in accordance with ~~international law and UN resolutions. In this regard, the historical Arab Peace Initiative~~ ^{provides an ideal framework for a just and comprehensive peace in the region. Such a} peace ~~must be~~ founded upon a solid recognition of the ~~imperative of need to ending the~~ Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory; the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian state, based on the 1967 border, living side by side to Israel in peace and security; and a just and agreed upon resolution to the refugees issue in accordance with UN GA resolution 194.

We Palestinians ~~want~~^{seek} the same rights, freedoms and responsibilities enjoyed by other peoples in their states, no more and no less: ~~the ability to live~~^{ing} free from foreign ~~occupation domination~~ and oppression ~~as an~~^{independent} and sovereign ~~nation~~. To that end, the Israeli occupation of all Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, which began in 1967 (indeed the longest in modern times), must come to an end.

While the Palestinian people and its representatives remain committed to a just peace, Israel has ~~continued~~^{intensified} its assault on Palestinian national and individual rights and ~~further intensified its policy aimed at entrenching~~ its colonial occupation, ~~as demonstrated by Israel's unceasing settlement activities, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, as well as its recent military onslaught culminating in the recent attack on the Gaza Strip, which resulted in the death and injury of more than 7,000 Palestinian civilians, the destruction thousands of Palestinian homes and the large-scale destruction of Gaza's civilian infrastructure and thousands of Palestinian homes.~~

Among ~~the urgent steps needed towards the ending the~~ of Israeli occupation, and in compliance with international law, ~~Israel must immediately cease all settlement activity, and the including construction of the Wall; reopen the reopening of~~ Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem; ~~lift the lifting the~~ of closure regime in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank; ~~a halt to demolitions of Palestinian homes house demolitions; and the cessation of all~~ military operations, incursions, assassinations and arrest against Palestinians, ~~particularly those directed at civilians;~~ and the facilitation of movement of people and goods within all occupied Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

~~As you know, there are few issues of greater~~ Of immense importance to peace in the region ~~is than that of Jerusalem. The An end of to the~~ Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and the

realization of Palestinian rights in and sovereignty ~~in-over~~ East Jerusalem, as the capital of the Palestinian state, is essential to any lasting peace agreement. We remain truthful to our vision of Jerusalem, based on mutual respect and recognition, as an open city ~~containinghousing the~~ two capitals for ~~the~~ two states, East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine and West Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel, under arrangements that guarantee respect for the status of the Holy City to the three Abrahamic faiths, access to holy sites and the maintenance of the Status Quo. ■■■

Diametrically opposed to this vision of peace are Israeli policies of unilateralism, exclusivity and the forceful imposition of facts of the ground that are aimed at altering the historic multicultural ~~historic~~ mosaic of the city. This is done by means of reducing Palestinian presence and severing East Jerusalem from the ~~reminder of occupied Palestinian territory~~ rest of the West Bank, which resulted, for the first time, in separating the church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Old City of Jerusalem from the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, and the Haram ~~el-al-Sharif~~ from the reminder of the Palestinian territory, thus depriving ~~Palestinians and Arabs of~~ Christians and Muslims, as well as other Arabs ■■■ from both faiths, from accessing their holy sites in Jerusalem. All this is compounded by increased Israeli assaults on the integrity of the Haram ~~el-al-Sharif~~, ~~the world's~~ Islam's third holiest ~~shrine site to Muslims in the world.~~

The issue of refugees is ~~the~~ another core issue of the conflict in the Middle East, and Wwithout ~~its~~ a just resolution in a comprehensive manner in accordance with international law and UN-GA resolution 194-, there can be no end to the conflict ~~and-or~~ lasting peace. Such a resolution rests on three foundations: ~~Israel's~~ recognition by Israel of its responsibility ~~for-in~~ the creation ~~of-and~~ perpetuation of the refugee problem; ~~the~~ recognition of the right of return; and reparations to the Palestinian refugees, including restitution.

Lastly, Israeli continues to imprisonhold ~~and deprive of liberty~~ more than 11,000 Palestinians political prisoners, ~~crowded~~ in Israeli jails and detention centers. Any movement towards a genuine peace must see the release of all Palestinian and Arab prisoners and their return to their families and homes.

We trust that his Holiness will kindly support our efforts aimed at ~~worldly~~ a just and lasting peace in our region by conveying these messages in the spirit of the above said ■■■ during his visit to the Holy Land.

Please accept the expression of our highest consideration.