



Speech for Palestinian National Day - Sydney, 17 November 2016

- Good evening distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen
- It's my pleasure to be with you tonight to celebrate the Palestinian National Day
- I'd like to thank the Australian Palestinian Community of NSW for doing a fantastic job in organising the observation of this important day, with special thanks going to Eddie Zananiri and Hassan Moussa—this event would not have been possible without your hard work and dedication
- Renowned Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish once said that “without hope we are lost”
- Darwish was also the author of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, which was proclaimed by the late President of the State of Palestine Yasser Arafat on 15 November 1988
- The Palestinian National Day is an opportunity for us to come together to celebrate the great achievements of the Palestinian people, who have progressed from dispossession to steadfastness and resistance through state-building; from being wiped off the map to becoming a widely-recognised international actor
- These achievements have been made in the face of great adversity, as I'm sure many of you are acutely aware
- We have had to overcome huge obstacles to peace—the illegal Israeli settlement project has continued unabated; occurring alongside the demolition of Palestinian homes, physical and verbal abuse, the detention of Palestinian children, and the confiscation of Palestinian land, water, and other vital resources
- These human rights violations form part of a wider project of forcing Palestinians further out of their homeland in a process that can only be described as ethnic cleansing, in blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, international humanitarian law and international human rights law
- The Palestinian people have been able to overcome the fragmented existence that the occupation has created for them by uniting around their shared identity
- This was visibly demonstrated during the First Intifada, where Palestinians found hope and joined hands in resisting the oppression of the occupation

- This collective movement has since transformed into an approach of steadfastness and non-violent resistance, working alongside the political strategies of state-building and internationalization to create a brighter future for Palestinians
- This has seen the development of transparent, accountable institutions that provide quality services to the Palestinian people through the implementation of effective public works programs
- Also, Palestine has asserted itself as a legitimate international actor—being recognised as a state by the United Nations and over 138 countries, and signing the ICC’s Rome Statute, among countless other achievements
- Such achievements have likewise been reflected in the developing relationship between Palestine and Australia
- Australian aid to Palestine has reached \$42.8 million annually, primarily supporting agricultural development, education, state-building, and health services
- On the political level, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop visited Palestine in September this year and conducted fruitful discussions with both the Palestinian leadership and the Minister for Economy, where it was agreed that trade relations and economic cooperation should be increased between Palestine and Australia
- Also, the official positions on Palestine of the Australian political parties has developed significantly in recent years
- The Australian public are likewise increasingly supportive of the Palestinian cause, with 64% of Australians condemning the building of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land
- These positive trends reflect the amazing advocacy work that is being conducted here in Australia, promoting the rights of the Palestinian people
- I am extremely proud of the Palestinian Community for their involvement in this advocacy and lobbying process
- We must continue to work together as Palestinians, further uniting and organising ourselves as a community to present a powerful, unified voice in advocating for the rights of the Palestinian people
- We must celebrate and unite around the hope that past achievements can give us, working together to guarantee future achievements, ensuring the liberation of the Palestinian people on our land
- As, to again quote Mahmoud Darwish, “we have on this land all of that which makes life worth living”
- Thank you everyone, and I hope that you enjoy this wonderful evening