

Dear friends and colleagues,

Let me first sincerely thank Ramia Sultan and the Gaza Children's Fund for inviting me to this important and timely screening. I am very pleased to be with you tonight to learn more about Gaza's resistance and resilience. There's no doubt that 'Gaza Fights for Freedom' is a thorough indictment of the Israeli military and its war crimes masquerading as 'proportionate self-defense'. At the same time, it offers a stunning cinematic portrayal of Palestinians' "heroic resistance", as described by the organizers, which is very true.

I want to seize this opportunity to acknowledge the resilience of the Palestinian people in Gaza and to salute their courageous resistance to the Israeli occupation and its brutal siege, which, as you all know, has continued now for more than 13 years.

From the beginning, Gaza has made a significant contribution to the Palestinian national liberation movement; its trailblazing is not new, and was actually instrumental in keeping our cause alive and progressing. The First Intifada started in Gaza when popular, non-violent rallies were held. So, it was Gazans who adapted this inspiring model of resistance to the Palestinian context. And, not only does it continue, but its origins will be remembered by future Palestinian generations.

The steady flow of images of children who were mercilessly killed by the latest Israeli aggression against Gaza is heartbreaking beyond words, and should trouble the conscience of the whole of the international community. Instead of condemning the unjustifiable killing of the entire Sawarkah family, the international community has, once again, shown its willingness to support Israel by condemning only the launching of rockets (which cause few if any casualties), and turning a blind eye to everything else. This hypocrisy and entrenched bias should not be tolerated anymore, and the international community ought to act to protect the Palestinian people in Gaza. Sadly, however, I won't hold my breath.

While it is imperative to raise funds for Gaza's children, and I encourage all of you to give any assistance you can via the Gaza Children's Fund, it is equally important to maintain the advocacy that calls for international protection for the Palestinian people in Gaza, and urges the Australian government to support any UN resolution that seeks to achieve this goal.

Also of high importance is the need to continue campaigning for the lifting of the unjust siege on Gaza through a bold and concerted advocacy program.

The story of Gaza and its children is the story of the Palestinian people from the 1948 Nakba to the present time. It is yet another link in the long chain of pain, suffering and indignity that began – and continues – with dispossession at the hands of a military occupation and an expansionist colonial enterprise that have been stained with Palestinian blood for more than 71 years.

But Palestinian resilience *will* continue until Palestine has been liberated, and, specifically, our long-awaited self-determination and statehood achieved.

Thank you for listening.