

International Fight for the Right to Self-Determination of the Palestinian People

Full text of speech at Al Quds Day rally and march, Toronto on June 9

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Greetings, Brother and Sisters, and Ramadan Mubarak!

On behalf of the Hamilton Coalition To Stop The War, I would like to thank the organizers for this opportunity to speak.

The status of Jerusalem/Al Quds will not be determined by the clownish performances of corrupt politicians such as Trump and Netanyahu in moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on the seventieth anniversary of the Nakba. Similarly, the right of national self-determination of the Palestinian people will never be extinguished through US imperial power or by brute force by its Israeli client state. The people of the world will never accept that.

The vote at the UN against the illegal US relocation of its embassy to Jerusalem as Israel's capital was 128-9. That's because everyone on the planet who supports peace and justice supports the Palestinian cause. Everyone who opposes racism, colonialism, and imperialism supports Palestine. Only a tiny minority of people who endorse racism, white supremacy, and capitalism or follow a warped form of messianic Christian Zionism support the State of Israel.

Go-it-alone misleaders such as Trump and Netanyahu are increasingly isolated. The international campaign of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) is gaining ground. The Israeli Finance Ministry claimed BDS could cost it up to \$40 billion annually. The whole world cheered as Messi and the Argentinian soccer team refused to play a "friendly" match with Israel. The people of the world applauded Shakira when she recently turned down a gig in Tel Aviv.

Even the Trudeau government, which shamefully voted at the UN against every pro-Palestinian resolution last fall, couldn't bring itself to vote on the same side as the US and Israel on the recent UN vote on the illegal relocation of the US embassy. Spinelessly, it abstained. It was spineless because the Trudeau government should have stood WITH the majority of the member states of the United Nations in condemning Trump's illegal move. Instead, even though Trudeau was terrified of aggravating his imperial master and spoiling a possible NAFTA trade deal, he knew he could never sell a vote in Canada to support the embassy move in Al Quds. The Trudeau government knows that, in two BBC opinion polls, two-thirds of Canadians oppose Israel's illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and a

big majority supported special status for Palestine in UN General Assembly. A poll done by Independent Jewish Voices and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East showed that Canadians, on the whole were light years ahead of their politicians on the question of criticism of the State of Israel and support for Palestine. So, brothers and sisters, if we want Canada to stop playing the role of enabler of Israel's endless war crimes, we need to step up our work lobbying all the political parties in Canada, who rarely do anything significant to support the Palestinian cause.

At the same time that Trump and Netanyahu are increasingly isolated on the world stage, the balance of forces in the Mideast is changing in favour of Palestine. After 17 years of permanent war on a number of nearby countries, the Arab and Muslim people of the Mideast are making important gains. Iraq, which was devastated by the illegal Anglo-American attack in 2003, has just defeated both ISIS and a US/Israeli project to split away the northern mainly Kurdish territory of Iraq into a separate state. And guess what? In yesterday's Globe and Mail, there was the report of General Vance, chief of Canada's defence staff, that it will no longer train Iraqi Kurdish militants in the arts of war. Rather, it has switched over to giving basic training to the national Iraqi army. Brothers and sisters, it was Harper and then Trudeau, with your tax dollars who sent Canadian military trainers to Iraq to assist the US/Israeli plan to partition that country. But now, that plan has been foiled by the Iraqi government, which recently used its jets to attack ISIS inside of Syria, with the blessing of the Syrian government. A new government has also been elected in Iraq which will even more strongly resist the US presence in that country.

In Syria, the Hamilton Coalition To Stop The War congratulates the government of President Bashar al Assad which foiled the attempted regime change operation that was inspired by the USA and strongly supported by Israel and other US allies such as Canada. Did you know that, most recently, the Trudeau government donated \$4.5 million of your tax dollars to the fraudulent White Helmets in Syria, the propaganda arm of Al Qaeda in Syria? It's shameful that the Canadian government is participating in this illegal regime change operation which violates the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. Israel too continues to violate Syrian sovereignty supporting terrorist mercenaries using the illegally-occupied Golan Heights as their base to fight the Syrian government. Israel has supplied ISIS with arms. Israel also used its air force to bomb Syria more than one hundred times during the course of the seven-year long war and supplied aid and weapons to separatist Kurdish elements in eastern Syria with a view to aid the USA in trying to partition that country.

Our Coalition also congratulates the courageous Syrian Arab Army for liberating Aleppo, Eastern Ghouta, and now Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp south of Damascus. Even as we gather here, the SAA is now advancing to liberate territories near Dara in the South of Syria right next to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. We wish them great success!

The lesson of Yarmouk, where Syrian soldiers and Palestinian militamen laid down their lives to liberate the homes of Palestinians, who were exiled once before from Palestine, shows that the Palestinian and Syrian national struggles are indivisible. *If you are for Palestine, then you must also be for Syria. If you are for Syria, you must also be for Palestine!*

Our Coalition also congratulates those allies of Syria who helped the win the battles against the terrorist proxy armies, namely Russia, Iran, Hezbollah of Lebanon, and the various Palestinian and popular militias. The war in Syria is not over yet. Turkish, US, and Israeli armies remain as occupiers in different parts of the country.

But the tide has turned in Syria and also in Lebanon, where Hezbollah, the popular movement and party which drove the the Israeli occupiers out of Lebanon over a period of bitter fighting lasting nearly two decades, succeeded, with its allies in winning a majority in democratic parliamentary elections. Similarly, amidst great suffering in Yemen, the outgunned but brave Ansullah movement continues successfully to resist Saudi/US/NATO/Israeli aggression now into its fourth year, even though the Trudeau government continues shamefully to sell arms to the Saudis.

Because the tide is turning against the US Empire and its Zionist allies, I repeat that there will not be an imperial solution to Jerusalem/al Quds. Rather, in the fullness of time, there will be a democratic popular solution to the question of Palestine. Hopefully, BDS will do in Palestine what it did in South Africa. Just as BDS helped peacefully to replace white minority apartheid rule with black majority rule, we hope that it will also peacefully replace Zionist minority apartheid rule with Palestinian majority rule, as no solution to the Palestinian national question is complete without the right of return of millions of Palestinian refugees to the former homes in all of historic Palestine. The Palestinians will have a state whose capital will be Al Quds. The nature and form of that state is up to the Palestinians to decide but we know that it will respect the freedom of religion of Muslims, Christians, Jews and will treat with respect its citizens no matter what their ethnicity.

As a Jew and a social justice and peace activist, my personal preference is for a majority Palestinian state in all of historic Palestine. That's why I say, "Palestine will be free, from the river to the sea!"

Thank you for your kind attention!

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