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GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT MAKES STATEMENT AT OPENING  
OF EMERGENCY SPECIAL SESSION ON PALESTINE

Following is the text of the statement made by General Assembly President Salim A. Salim (United Republic of Tanzania) yesterday morning, 22 July, as the Assembly began its emergency special session on the question of Palestine:

We are meeting today in this seventh emergency special session to discuss a problem which has most serious implications for the peace and security, not only of the Middle East region, but of the world at large. Yet the problem of Palestine is not a new problem. It has constantly preoccupied the attention of the United Nations for more than three decades.

It is an issue which is now universally accepted to be the core of the Middle East conflict -- a conflict which has for four times since the inception of the United Nations seen the area in flames with devastating consequences for all the peoples of the region.

For several years the General Assembly has addressed itself specifically to the question of Palestine. For many more years, the Assembly has discussed the question of the Middle East conflict in its entirety. Throughout these discussions, one factor has emerged incontestable. This is a just and lasting peace to the Middle East conflict requires, a priori, a just solution to the problem of Palestine.

It is one of the anachronisms of our Organization that, despite the clear and universal recognition of the nature of the problem and notwithstanding the many resolutions adopted by the United Nations in pursuit of a just solution, justice, which is the sine qua non of a lasting solution, has continued to elude the Palestinian people. Indeed, it is undeniable that the plight of the Palestinian people has been made worse by the events that have taken place in the occupied West Bank since the General Assembly last discussed the question.

The convening of the emergency session testifies to the awareness and recognition by the international community of the serious threat to peace and

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security that the deteriorating situation in the area poses. It is also a reaffirmation of the world community's conviction of the central nature of the Palestinian question to the resolution of the Middle East conflict.

This session is therefore confronted with enormous responsibilities and a historic opportunity. The responsibilities are enormous because of the expectations of the peoples of the world that this Organization will live up to its principles and, above all, promote a genuine resolution to the conflict. Perhaps nowhere are such expectations greater and more justified than in the minds of the dispossessed Palestinian people. The opportunity is historic in the sense that through constructive action we can make a contribution to the resolution of the thorny problem before us. It is self-evident that this session can only do so by living up to the principles of our Organization as enshrined in the Charter and by scrupulous respect for international law.

It must be the objective of this session to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people by striving for a solution which will enable them to exercise their legitimate rights to self-determination, including the right to establish an independent state of their own, if they so choose. It must be the aim of this session to strive for the scrupulous application of the principle of non-admissibility of occupation of territory by force and consequently to strive for the total withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Arab territories. It must also be the objective of this session to work for the creation of conditions whereby all States of the area would be guaranteed their independence.

In sum, the objective should be to secure a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East which will usher in a new era for the peoples of the area and in the process eliminate one of the most serious crises points which threatens international peace and security. It is self-evident that in the pursuit of this objective the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, has an important role.

These are not new principles. They constitute part and parcel of the many resolutions and decisions adopted by our Organization. Yet the fact remains that such resolutions have remained unimplemented. Clearly, therefore, one of the challenges of this session is to work constructively and meaningfully for the implementation of these decisions.

As the situation in the Middle East has continued to deteriorate, there has been an even greater awareness, or may we call it consciousness, on the part of the nations of the world of the need to act in order to avoid further escalation with inponderable consequences. The agony and suffering of the Palestinian people has evoked not only greater world concern but, more importantly, a rising commitment and determination to pursue the path of justice which can thus provide conditions of peace, freedom, stability and security for the region and all its peoples.

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This session can make an important contribution if it advances, positively and constructively, the international consensus in support of Palestinian legitimate rights and thus build a solid foundation for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

I cannot conclude my remarks without expressing my gratitude and appreciation for the high honour which you once again have accorded to both my country and myself. I am confident that the support and co-operation extended to me during my Presidency of the last session will be similarly extended as the General Assembly deliberates on this undoubtedly important and urgent question affecting international peace and security.

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