

*Permanent Observer Mission
of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations*



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة
لدولة فلسطين
لدى الأمم المتحدة

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Statement by Loureen Sayej, Third Secretary, before the 79th Session of the General Assembly Meeting of the Sixth Committee on Crimes Against Humanity (Agenda item: 80)

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by Mauritania on behalf of the Arab Group.

On 13 April 2024, Ashraf Nafedth, a young Palestinian man in Gaza, filmed himself burning his international law textbook, which he picks up from the rubble of his destroyed home. The book used to have “a very special place in my heart” he tells us, before he sets it aflame and denounces international law as “the biggest lie known to history.”

Ashraf encapsulates a deep sense of frustration and profound grief in the face of inhumanity and injustice. In the face of mistrust and doubt in the law and its institutions. A deep sense of confusion.

Over the past year, many among us here, legal advisors, have related to Ashraf’s rage and realization that the promise international law holds, ‘that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ has been broken.

And millions around the world of our citizens have also rallied in solidarity because they related to Ashraf’s rage. They see their grievances and the injustice they themselves historically experienced, from colonialism, to enslavement, to genocides, occupations oppression, racism, and discrimination, crystallized in or through the lens of Ashraf; through the lens of Palestine.

They rallied, because 75 years of building an international law edifice to hold accountable the culpable and prevent the unthinkable, has neither protected the most vulnerable nor salvaged the most oppressed. They rallied because 75 years of building an international law edifice encompassed in our UN Charter has been shredded at the GA from its rostrum, by those who want to erode the work of humanity, by those committing the worst of crimes against humanity. They rallied because 75 years of building an international law edifice is also being undermined by those who claim champion it on one hand but want to reshape it to their liking and change its rules depending on the identity of the victim or the identity of the perpetrator.

Ashraf’s rage and that of millions around the world should be a reckoning for us to further commit to our humanity and commit to the law. To reclaim what the law should be and what it should look like from the standpoint of those we have failed to protect, for their sake, ours, and the next generations whom we promised to save from the scourge of war.

This rage demands an immediate action, and fortunately for us we have a way to make use of legal tools to restore international legality, accountability and respect for humanity and dignity of all.

The State of Palestine reiterates its unwavering commitment to the rule of law, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, the principle of humanity and to human rights and dignity. This commitment guides our unequivocal and long-standing position to fighting impunity and our commitment to the objective of a universal Convention to prevent and punish crimes against humanity.

The State of Palestine also welcomed the draft articles on crimes against humanity and recognizes the indispensable role of the ILC as it is uniquely placed as the universal body tasked with making recommendations for the purpose of encouraging the progressive development of international law and its codification.

The State of Palestine supported the inclusive and deliberative approach in discussing the draft articles in a resumed session format and actively participated in the deliberations during the resumed session. We were encouraged that this approach will further inform the General Assembly's process to find consensus on a path forward towards a Convention.

An important part of our legacy will be determined by the actions and inactions in this room. We must act with the victims in mind, all victims, the victims who lost hope in the efficacy of the law, the victims we might not be able to spare but have a duty to deliver justice to, and those we might be able to save from such a horrific fate. This is why we support convening an international conference on the basis of the draft articles. We support the goals behind the draft resolution presented by Mexico and Gambia and we will work to achieve consensus on its basis

In our final statement during the resumed session in April, we stated that for some, these draft articles are theories, for others they are history, but for us, and millions around the world, they are daily realities; intolerable realities sustained by protracted impunity and institutionalized racism and double standards which call into question the universality, efficacy, and relevance of the international law order and stunt its development.

This cannot be more relevant than today as we continue to hear the screams of our people enduring the fire in their flesh for an entire year, but we sit here to say that despite being denied its protection for decades, the Palestinian people are irredeemably and inherently optimistic about the law providing a path out of the bloody one we are currently on. We encourage all of you to join us in this hope and renew our commitment to humanity by affirming new starting points for generations to come.