

The address of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States at the Union for the Mediterranean

27 November 2023

I express my gratitude to my dear friends Ayman Al-Safadi and Josep Borrell for the efforts they exerted to make our meeting today possible. Additionally, I extend my appreciation to the Secretary-General, Ambassador Nasser Kamel, for his consistent dedication throughout the year.

While there is no need to reiterate the well-known Arab and Islamic positions concerning the barbaric Israeli aggression on Gaza, I will highlight three specific points for your consideration:

Firstly, comprehending the events of 7 October requires an understanding of the path that led to this tragic incident. As Arabs, we unequivocally reject the targeting of civilians on that day. However, we also comprehend the trajectory that brought us to this sorrowful situation—a path conceived and led by those who believed in the perpetual continuation of the occupation. This line of thinking included transforming Palestinians into subjects in an apartheid state, fostering a belief that eliminating any prospects for the Palestinians would suffice to spread despair and erase their cause. Regrettably, this mindset and approach have steered us to the present moment with all its violence, loss of life, and ugliness.

This same ideology remains the driving force behind the indiscriminate killing of Palestinian civilians today, including thousands of children. Unfortunately, this discriminatory ideology has held sway over Israel for more than 15 years. It is crucial for all those dedicated to peace to recognise the culpability of the racist Israeli movement not just for the situation in Gaza but across the entire occupied territory of Palestine. Consequently, there is an urgent need to confront this fascist political and military ideology, along with all the reprehensible ideas it espouses.

Secondly, our collective focus and efforts today are dedicated to a singular goal—to halt these massacres, cease the aggression against Gaza immediately, and reinstate a minimum level of normalcy for its children and residents. Simultaneously, we cast our gaze towards the future and

emphatically assert that there is no future for Gaza if it is treated in isolation from the West Bank as if it were a separate and self-contained issue.

Gaza, today, symbolises a chapter within the broader Palestinian issue; it is an integral part of it. Any proposed solutions for Gaza must be intricately woven into the comprehensive resolution of this issue based on the two-state vision. I speak candidly when I state that we all gathered here firmly believe in the two-state solution, recognising it as the sole path to settling this longstanding conflict. However, a sober assessment of our actual efforts in implementing this solution on the ground is necessary.

The two-state solution cannot materialise on its own; it requires an unavoidable political confrontation with the occupying state that obstructs its realisation. Every advocate for future peace must grasp that achieving this peace carries a price, necessitating continuous and sustained efforts—not merely seasonal or formal endeavours—to swiftly transform the two-state solution into a tangible reality.

What we seek in the near future is not merely the exchange of ideas or perceptions but a sustained commitment to continuous diplomatic and political action to activate the settlement process. Clear and viable paths already exist in this regard, prominently the International Peace Conference, supported and propelled by both the Arab and European factions. It is imperative to strengthen coordination along this trajectory, starting today, in anticipation of the imminent moment when, God willing, the guns in Gaza will fall silent.

Thirdly, the Arab-European space holds strategic importance for both sides, a significance epitomised by this organisation. However, as emphasised in previous years, the Palestinian issue remains a substantial impediment to realising the full potential of this strategic relationship.

While some may have perceived our previous statements as exaggeration or political rhetoric, they were, in fact, an unvarnished truth. Today, I reiterate another truth that requires our collective attention. The war on Gaza, due to its unprecedented ugliness and blatant racism, plants seeds of hatred, despair, and anger that can only serve to empower extremist forces. None of us desires the triumph, prevalence, or influence of these forces in shaping the agenda for the future and relations between our peoples. However, we must exercise caution, recognising the potential for such outcomes, and

collectively distance ourselves from positions that perpetuate racism, hatred, or provide a licence to kill based on identity.

Vigilance is crucial, especially considering that new generations closely observe attitudes, reactions, and any instances of double standards. True protection against hate speech lies in promoting discourse based on shared human values and positions grounded in moral principles. This involves unequivocal condemnation of civilian killings without discrimination based on identity. This approach not only safeguards the future but also strengthens civilisational communication across the Mediterranean space, shielding our societies from the devastating consequences of religious and civilisational wars.

Thank you all.