

## **Prime Minister's Question Time on Tuesday 31 October 2023 Palestinian Plight and Israeli Cruelty**

In this hour, I must urgently cast a spotlight on the dire, escalating humanitarian catastrophe that grips the Gaza Strip. Unless we are made of wood or our hearts are cast in stone, it is impossible not to be moved, shocked and repulsed by the spectacle of killing and mayhem being perpetrated, even as we are gathered here in this august House.

The chilling statistics bear testimony to a tragedy of epic proportions: As of the latest report from the authorities in Gaza, **8,805** Palestinians have been killed and nearly **20,000** injured. Of this number killed, **3,600** are children. Entire neighbourhoods have been reduced to rubble and hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses destroyed. This is nothing if not a grim and shocking testament to the relentless, indiscriminate onslaught of Israeli aggression, cruelty and inhumanity.

This is not a Palestinian-Israeli war. It is no war at all but outright massacre of a helpless people in Gaza who have been for the last six decades incarcerated in the largest open air prison in the world. It is a deliberate, calculated and cold-blooded attempt to decimate the Palestinian people.

For those who continue to think or suggest that the atrocities committed against the Palestinians affect Muslims alone, let it be reminded that the world's most ancient Christian community resides in Palestine, totalling 47,000, based on a census conducted in 2017. Palestinian Christians too have been driven out from their historic cities in large numbers and the underlying cause is the illegal Israeli occupation and apartheid policies. In this sordid history and the on-going saga of cruelty, oppression and genocide, Palestine's Muslim and Christian communities alike are the helpless victims.

The Western media rarely present the faces of Palestinian Christians, or if mentioned, tend to convey the image of them as mere bystanders in Palestine. This is utterly wrong because Palestinian Christians have been victimised just as much as their Muslim brothers and sisters.

The point I want to make here is that there are strong socio-cultural and spiritual connections between the Muslim and Christian communities which confer on Palestinians their unique collective identity. Nevertheless, the Zionist government of Israel is hellbent on presenting a binary conception of the crisis, capitalising on the notion of a besieged Jewish state being encircled by an overwhelming and menacing population of Muslims in the region and therefore facing imminent existential threat.

Let us be clear: The Zionist State of Israel is an occupying force and as such it carries responsibilities under international law.

There are no two ways about it. We condemn terrorism, in all its forms, and we categorically condemn the actions of killing innocent lives and taking women and children as hostages. By

the same token, we unequivocally condemn the bombing of civilians, of homes and hospitals and the consequential massacre of innocent lives, children, women and men that is being carried out day and night by the Israeli forces.

These criminal acts are in clear violation of the norms of international law.

The actions taken by Israel - the cutting off of food, water, humanitarian aid and electricity are violations of international law.

“The situation in Palestine ... is an agonizing reminder that the fight for justice knows no borders and we must stand united in solidarity with all oppressed people.

As I stated at the UN General Assembly, the credibility of the international system itself is at stake and we must voice our opinion and encourage others to do so in order to preserve that system which seeks to uphold peace in the world.

It is a fool’s errand to think that Malaysia is unaffected by what is happening in the world. We are a trading nation actively engaged in regional and international commercial and economic activities, proactively reaching out for FDIs to drive our economic advancement. So we are Malaysia is deeply and profoundly tied to what happens everywhere in the world.

We have embarked on the difficult task, long ignored, (let me be clear, there will be remain a fiercely independent nation and continue to express our right and our position on the issue justice and freedom without fear or favour.

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