Nelson Mandela Spoke forcefully for Palestine and against Israel’s Illegal Occupation

Nelson Mandela: “We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

In 1990, Nelson Mandela embraced Arafat in Lusaka, Zambia, likening the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to the struggle against South African apartheid. He said, “If the truth alienates the powerful Jewish community in South Africa, that’s too bad.”

In September 1990, addressing the Reform congregation of Johannesburg, Mandela said: “If Zionism means the right of the Jewish people to seize territory and deny the Palestinian people the right to self-determination, we condemn it”.

Speaking about Israel and Palestine in 1990, Mandela said: “If one has to refer to any parties as a terrorist state, one might refer to the Israeli government because they are the people who are slaughtering defenseless and innocent Arabs in the occupied territories”.

In 1997, speaking at The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in Pretoria, South Africa (4 December 1997), Mandela said:
“The temptation in our situation is to speak in muffled tones about an issue such as the right of the people of Palestine to a state of their own. We can easily be enticed to read reconciliation and fairness as meaning parity between justice and injustice. Having achieved our own freedom, we can fall into the trap of washing our hands of difficulties that others faces.

Yet we would be less than human if we did so.

“It is in this spirit that I have come to join you today to add our own voice to the universal call for Palestinian self-determination and statehood.

“We would be beneath our own reason for existence as government and as a nation, if the resolution of the problems of the Middle East did not feature prominently on our agenda.

“When in 1977, the United Nations passed the resolution inaugurating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, it was asserting the recognition that injustice and gross human rights violations were being perpetrated in Palestine. In the same period, the UN took a strong stand against apartheid; and over the years, an international consensus was built, which helped to bring an end to this iniquitous system.

“But we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”
“As early as February 1995, our government formalized its relations with the State of Palestine when we established full diplomatic relations. We are proud of the modest technical assistance that our government is offering Palestine in such areas as Disaster Management, women’s empowerment and assistance to handicapped children. But the various discussions with our counterparts in Palestine are an indication that we can do more.”

In Israel and Palestine in 1999, Mandela told reporters that “Israel should withdraw from all the areas which it won from the Arabs in 1967, and in particular Israel should withdraw completely from the Golan Heights, from south Lebanon and from the West Bank.”

He also said: “My view is that talk of peace remains hollow if Israel continues to occupy Arab lands,” he said.

“I understand completely well why Israel occupies these lands. There was a war. But if there is going to be peace, there must be complete withdrawal from all of these areas,” Mandela added.

In an interview with Newsweek on September 10, 2002, Mandela said:

“Neither Bush nor Tony Blair has provided any evidence that such weapons exist [in Iraq]. But what we know is that Israel has weapons of mass destruction. Nobody talks about that. Why should there be one standard for one country, especially because it is black, and another one for another country, Israel, that is white. …”

Speaking at the International Women’s Forum in Johannesburg, on January 29, 2003, prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Mandela said:

“It’s a tragedy what is happening, what Bush is doing. All Bush wants is Iraqi oil. There is no doubt that the U.S. is behaving badly. Why are they not seeking to confiscate weapons of mass destruction from their ally Israel? This is just an excuse to get Iraq’s oil.”

Upon the news of Palestinian Authority chairman Yasser Arafat’s death in 2004, Mandela, who met Arafat numerous times over the years, hailed the leader as an “outstanding freedom fighter.”
Yasser Arafat was one of the outstanding freedom fighters of this generation, one who gave his entire life to the cause of the Palestinian people,” said Mandela, who had met Arafat numerous times over the years.

Assuming the chairmanship of the 113-nation Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at a summit in Durban, South Africa on September 2, 1998, Mandela condemned the administration of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as “narrow and chauvinistic.” He urged the United States and the international community to press for a quick solution to tensions in the Middle East.

Mandela listed a number of security concerns facing the NAM over the three years of the South African chairmanship, but apportioned blame directly only to Netanyahu.

“We remain gravely concerned about the situation in the Middle East, especially the positions taken by the Netanyahu administration in Israel, which has blocked progress towards a just and peaceful solution, including the formation of a sovereign state of Palestine.

“The international community and the United States in particular has a responsibility to ensure that this matter is addressed expeditiously.

“We should not allow that the narrow, chauvinistic interests of the current administration in Israel should succeed to block the prospect of a permanent and just peace throughout the Middle East,” Mandela said.