

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



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة  
لدولة فلسطين  
لدى الأمم المتحدة

*Statement by Dr. Riyad Mansour, Ambassador, Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations before the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (thirteenth session), General Debate, New York, 15 December 2014:*  
*(Please check against delivery)*

Mr. President,

I would like to wish you warm congratulations on your election as President of the Assembly of States Parties and would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to the outgoing President, Ambassador Tina Intelmann, for her hard work and dedication over the past three years. I also wish to thank the outgoing judges for their expertise and contributions to the Court and to the international community and congratulate the newly elected judges.

Mr. President,

It is a very special moment for the State of Palestine as we were invited to participate in this meeting under rule 94 as an observer State for the first time. On behalf of the Palestinian people and their leadership, we are profoundly grateful for this invitation and we have listened very closely to each statement made, from the opening session and throughout the General Debate. The collective messages being conveyed by States Parties and observers, including with regard to combating impunity, upholding justice, defending human rights and institutionalizing complementarity, have been resounding, heard loud and clear. The importance of universality of the Rome Statute and the call to States that have not ratified the Rome Statute and joined the International Criminal Court was heard even louder. In this regard, it should be noted that there is in fact a consensus among the Palestinian people, their political organizations and their leadership to join the ICC. The time to join will be decided by our leadership at an appropriate time. We may very well be the 123<sup>rd</sup> State Party to join the ICC.

Mr. President,

We view the ICC as the international legal and peaceful mechanism to combat impunity and seek accountability and justice. It is the Court where the Palestinian people desire to seek justice for the war crimes and crimes against humanity being perpetrated against them by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. If crimes are being committed against our people and we are unable to prosecute the criminals, isn't the ICC the correct place to go to? If the Rome Statute states that "*the transfer, directly or indirectly, by the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies,*" is a war crime, then, in the case of illegal Israeli settlements and settlers in our occupied land, isn't it logical to go to the ICC so as to prosecute and bring an end to this ongoing war crime and to prosecute this continuing crime? When more than 500 Palestinian children are mercilessly killed and more than 3000 are injured in 50 days by the occupying Power during its aggression against the southern part of the occupied State of Palestine in the Gaza Strip, shouldn't these crimes be prosecuted and those responsible for committing them be punished? When entire Palestinian families have been killed by the occupying Power and their family tree will literally no longer grow, shouldn't these crimes be prosecuted in the ICC?

Joining the ICC is congruent with upholding the rule of law and international law and it is an appropriate mechanism to seek justice and defend human rights. It is a peaceful, judicial mechanism for redress. Anyone claiming that joining the ICC is a red line that should not be crossed is in essence opposing your collective position on what the ICC stands for. The State of Palestine should be encouraged to and commended for seeking justice and protection through a legal, peaceful and civilized method which the ICC offers. Those committing crimes against a civilian population, including against the Palestinian people, should not be lecturing us on issues related to the rule of law, international law, morality and humanity. They should be listening to the loud messages being echoed in these halls and by the wise statements of those who support the noble mission of the ICC.

As the ICC promotes justice and human rights, we feel it appropriate to share with all of you that this year the State of Palestine joined seven core human rights treaties without a single reservation, in addition to acceding to the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Convention. This was a very proud moment for the State of Palestine and is a reflection of our strong commitment to human rights and international law. We view the ICC as a necessary component for strengthening the rule of law and upholding its respect, and we pledge to the members of the Assembly of States Parties, to our colleagues and to you Mr. President that we will work closely, on the basis of the Rome Statute, with the Prosecutor, Judges and entire structure of the ICC, to promote those imperative objectives.

Thank you, Mr. President.