

The major excerpts from the speech of President Abbas in Ramallah, 16 December 2006

(Jerusalem Media & Communication Center)

In the name of God the forgiving and the Compassionate,

these days, we had to talk to our people after the long suffering that we faced in the past months and in which our people remained patient in front of these conditions. We had to address our people and tell them what happened because the people are the source of all authorities and our reference.

I want to refer to the ugly crime against humanity which is the killing of the three innocent brothers. a group of murderers who don't belong to the people of Islam or religions besiege the children's car and kill them. How can a human being commit such a crime. all religions prohibited such crimes. Why did they commit this crime. there was previous killing against officers and judges who were killed in cold blood. I ask everyone and all those who carry this illegitimate weapon: why?

these children will go to heaven and will tell God about the murderers. these incidents call on us to talk about what happened last Thursday at Rafah Crossing. the PM decided to have a tour abroad and this is his right and we held contacts with all parties: the Israelis first, the Europeans and the Egyptians, and we wanted the PM to travel abroad in a dignified manner. I commissioned Tayyeb Abdul Rahim, Saeb Erekat and the conspirator Dahlan - they call him a conspirator - imagine. we heard that he has funds to smuggle into the country; we say here that we are in need of fund but not smuggled funds. When he arrived back, masses came to welcome him but they were carrying weapons and RPJ rockets. they are supposed to meet him with flowers and not machine guns.

Thousands came and when he was delayed, these masses broke into the Crossing and damaged and robbed the Crossing. why? we exert all efforts to let him enter back in a dignified manner. The Europeans left the Crossing. so he couldn't enter. We asked them to return to the crossing; the Europeans told us that they were fired at. who would fire at them. finally, he entered the crossing and returned home. where is the conspiracy? then, they say that they entered the crossing to stress on the Palestinian sovereignty. is this the way to stress this. we deceive ourselves. we have no sovereignty. we are under self autonomy. We agreed with the Israelis on the crossing and it facilitated the crossing of the people instead of standing for hours in long lines. The crossing was closed after the entry of the PM and we appealed to all parties to re-open it for the passage of the Pilgrims to Hajj. Talking about conspiracies is a shameful act. fabricating facts is shameful. then they talk about deploying troops. When do you see troops in the streets. These troops are not against anyone; these troops are against those who try to sabotage and destroy.

If we ask ourselves why we have this chaos. we know that there is chaos, and we sought a political solution through which we can unify ourselves. I say that when we see that the conditions are like this, we have to see what we can do. the reasonable people should look and seek the truth and I say that without political conciliation, we will have chaos. we accepted all insults and promises to reach this conciliation and we will continue to do so. I wished in this meeting to keep my promise. We said that the national unity government is coming in November. Why didn't this happen? and why did I say that the dialogue reached a dead-end.

If you remember, we held presidential elections, and we were clear on the political principles and slogans, and we said that this is our positions and this is the truth which might harm some, but we said the whole truth because I don't want to deceive anyone.

I am very honest because lies are short lived and this is not part of my qualities. many events happened in 2005, mainly the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Gaza Strip. Voices came out

saying We don't want this. They wanted an agreement, and we said we don't want an agreement because the agreement entails commitments, and after a long dialogue, we said the Israelis will leave and we will facilitate the departure of the Israeli army and settlers. we said Thanks God, we liberated one important part of our lands. we received dozens of investment projects from Arab countries and western countries and Japan and economic projects and tourism projects, but this never happened. why? because we are determined to fire rockets. Israel left Gaza Strip. let us keep this Strip calm for investments, but there are people still determined to fire rockets. Who dictates this to them. I am sure that this does not serve the national interests. Before we held the legislative elections, there were vicious protests saying they don't want Hamas to participate in the elections. we said Hamas is part of the Palestinian people and should participate. I am proud of signing Oslo Accords and all elections were held under the umbrella of Oslo Accords. Israel tried to prevent Palestinians in Jerusalem from participating in the elections. I stressed on this and the Israelis finally accepted their participation and Hamas won and took the majority and we welcomed them because we believe in democracy and I hope that everybody believe in democracy which is participation and not exclusion. We respect the democracy and we commissioned the majority to form the government they deemed appropriate and they held contacts with everybody but no party accepted to join because Hamas refused the source of authority which is the PLO. despite this, I told them present your government but I advise you to abide by the international and Arab legitimacy. we are not isolated. we are part of the Arab world and the whole world. they refused. I faced two options: either to stop the formation of the government and this is my right or to let them try their chance and we did that and at the same and despite the accusations, I said everywhere in the world, give them their chance; they have no experience, give them time. But unfortunately, we were faced with an oppressive siege and we tried all efforts to get out of the siege and we reached with the Europeans on TIM so that the people can eat and the funds came to the Arab League which cannot and I repeat the Arab League cannot send us the funds, so I found a solution which is to transfer the funds to me and I will deliver the funds. But they said: We allowed the funds to come to your account.

I go back to the PLO issue and I hear many statements: Activating the PLO and they talk from outside and then they say that this PLO Executive Committee is not legitimate and they know that this legitimacy of the PLO allows them to be hosted in the countries where they are staying. The PLO Executive Committee is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. people issue orders from outside. the people here should decide things and not the people who are sitting abroad and relaxed. the siege was imposed and the Israelis continue with their aggression and killing and incursions and arrests and their planes fire missiles at us and then they talk about the sovereignty of the Crossing. We failed in ending the siege and we could not end the siege which led to decrease of revenues by 61% and halt of operational expenses and the arrears in the salaries of the civil servants. we ask how people are living? shouldn't the people ask us why these conditions. the crisis is escalating. debts to the banks reached \$642 million and then there are the funds seized by Israel which is more than \$600 million. so the situation is getting worse and add to this the security chaos which led to the killing of 320 persons. Part of our ministers are in prison and another part are wanted. then, the PLC does not convene, so all institutions are paralyzed and the security services are also paralyzed because they are not getting paid. all of the above led to the dialogue. The PLC made an initiative and after three months, they started to feel the crisis and the siege which is the result of this government. We welcomed the dialogue. We want a solution to this crisis. they started the dialogue and I said then we don't want a dialogue for the sake of dialogue, and we received several initiatives from various parties and then finally we got the initiative from the prisoners who are more responsible than all of us.

Then they started to describe it as an American document and an Israeli document. When the legislative elections took place, they said President Abu Mazen is the best person, now with regards to the government, they criticized me. we need a clear position from them. I said then, either you reach a solution in the dialogue or we go to referendum. they said the referendum is illegal. why? the people are the source of all authorities. We want to ask the people about the reconciliation document of the prisoners. we should not close our eyes in front of the truth. We said: either you agree or you go to referendum. then, the event of the soldier took place. then they signed the national reconciliation document immediately and they

consider it sacred now. It is so easy to launch accusations against each other. then, they signed the document and then the war erupted against Gaza Strip and this soldier cost us 500 martyrs and 4,000 wounded. We pay the sacrifices from our people who are under the poverty line. the war on Lebanon ended and we sat to talk and return to the document and how to form a national unity government, and the document has good principles. before that, I met with Olmert who told me that they will release a large number of prisoners, and this happened before all of this. We never forgot our prisoners. We always sought a solution for the prisoners. It is a sacred cause and top priority in any dialogue or negotiations with any party, then the events happened and the dialogue on the prisoners was obstructed. then we sat in a dialogue to form the government. Then, we set the guidelines which say that we recognize the references signed by the PLO which is the political reference of the PNA. The Cabinet is supposed to assist the President; We don't have two heads. It is my right to discharge the government any time I want. They cant scare us. they cant export fear to us. This is my constitutional right. it is written in the guidelines which were signed by both parties. it said the government assists the President in setting the policies based on the Arab Initiative and international legitimacy. We came out to the masses and informed them that we signed these guidelines and the breakthrough is soon and that was in September 11, 2006 . after three days, I was going to the UN to promote a government headed by Ismail Hanieh. I personally respect this person. I was convinced then that it is my duty to tell the Americans that I want to form a government headed by Hanieh. I wanted to convince the Arabs, the Europeans and the Americans about this government. Hanieh came to me before I leave and said: We refuse the Arab initiative and we don't want to be in the negotiations teams. I asked why you refuse the Arab Initiative; he said: because it ignores the rights of the refugees and because it calls for recognizing Israel . I answered: the Arab Initiative includes a clear text talking about an agreed upon solution based on Resolution 194. The Arab Initiative comes from an Arab country which commits itself along with all Arabs to have normal relations with Israel if Israel withdraws from the Palestinian and Arab territories and if a Palestinian state is established and if the refugees cause is solved. Then, we want to New York without anything. The Arabs also didn't buy this. You cant pick and choose. We need to abide by the international legitimacy. Qatar then initiated and invited us here and we made the six point initiative which includes mutual end of violence. Qatar exerted tremendous efforts but they told him that they accept this but they wanted a slight change on the six points to include that the President would recognize these legitimacies and not the government. of course this didn't work.

Then, Nasser Eddin al-Sha'er came to me and said we have to find a solution. We said fine, so we agreed on a government of technocrats that can end the siege and the government must abide by the letter of commissioning and to add to it the national conciliation document.

Then, Hamas told Nasser Eddin al-Sha'er that you are not authorized to talk. then, Mustafa al-Barghouthi and Ziad Abu Amro worked on the matter. I then sat with Hanieh to try to reach an agreement. We wanted a government to end the siege. Then, they started talking about shares of each faction, I told them I am talking on behalf of Fatah and I say that Fatah is ready not to take any ministry if we can form a government that can end the siege. The people are burning and we are still in the dialogue. Then, they started asking for ambassadors and governor, I said this needs a lot of time. then PM Hanieh came to me and said he wants to travel in a trip abroad. I told him I fear that all our efforts have collapsed. There are ideas here and there and half truths. there is the regional alliances; we still suffer because of our position regarding the invasion of Kuwait . Until now, we still suffer. We refuse any regional or international alliances. We have a sacred cause and we have to win the support of everybody. We don't want to engage in a war against anyone. We are still under occupation. We have to keep balanced relations with everyone. When I arrived in Kuwait , I announced that I apologize to Kuwait about our position. We need to keep relations with all. We must not interfere in other affairs of countries. then, there are ideas about a Palestinian state on all of Palestine because the land of Palestine is a Waqf land. then they say they accept a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and will give Israel a 15-year truce. We seek the interests of our people. We are facing a difficult situation. We have become beggars. The gains have retreated. People are starting to lose hope and then there is the collapse of social values and the collapse of the institutions. We have our constants and we will struggle for them: Jerusalem is ours and the settlements are illegal and a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders living in peace next

to the state of Israel and solving the refugees cause based on Resolution 194 which says compensation for those who don't desire to return and I accept this. Despite our internal conflicts, we will not reach a civil war. The Palestinian blood is a red line. we will abide by the democratic process.

Now, some people are talking and living in illusions and saying that they are breaking the siege. Alistair Crook told them some things but he is retired. these are illusions. I wish these are facts. they are receiving illusionary signs. When we want to form a government, the factions have nothing to say; the minister is part of the government but as a member of his faction he is not committed to anything or recognizing anyone. Today, there is a European initiative and then there is the Baker-Hamilton Report which mentions important points and this is the first time that the world recognizes that the Palestinian Cause is the core of the Middle East. we should not waste these chances and opportunities. some even say their government is God's will: what does this mean? Religion is the property of God.

Can we continue like this? therefore, after all the above, and as I see the people looking to me as the president who is responsible for the people, so I decided to call for early presidential and legislative elections because the people are the source of all authorities and I want the people to choose and everyone has to bear their responsibilities. I will always remain open to forming a national unity government.