

**Statement of H.E Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State
of Palestine
Dr. Riad Malki
20 year Anniversary Rome Statute
17 July 2018**

Your Excellency, President of the Court,
Your Excellency, President of the ASP,
Distinguished Guests,

Contemporary history has taught us that in the absence of accountability, atrocity crimes would happen again and again.

Twenty years ago, the concept of justice and accountability took an unprecedented leap at the global level. The establishment of the International Criminal Court and the birth of the Rome statute offered peoples around the world the promise of real justice, based on the principles of accountability and universality of human rights. A court that would not serve the victorious to prosecute the vanquished, nor be set up when massacres occur in certain places and not others, but a court with a true universal calling to protect everyone, everywhere. From that simple truth emerged the ambitious project of an international criminal court, and its impressive and yet imperfect realization.

It is remarkable to see just how much international criminal law has grown. The adoption of the Rome Statute in itself was significant, and its evolution ever since has been nothing but extraordinary.

The Rome Statute embodies the vision of allies at the front lines of the fight for justice, armed only with the might of the law. Our success so far only goes to prove that the pen is indeed mightier than the sword. Conflicts can only lead to momentary victories, while international law is a vehicle for permanent peace.

The Rome Statute has proven to be a living, breathing instrument. It is flexible enough to accommodate for the changing times. Yet it remains firmly grounded in its founding principle of legality and accountability and guided by the overarching purpose of putting an end to impunity.

We endeavor to leave no legal gaps through which perpetrators of crimes can escape the hand of justice.

Over the years, the Court has inevitably had many challenges. Some we have been able to graciously overcome. Others, are still ongoing.

For one, we continue to confront the tremendous challenge to the very essence of justice, represented in delayed justice, which as many of you agree is justice denied. The preventative role of the Rome Statute is directly related to the promptness of the Court's reaction and it must be one of our top priorities moving forward. The only way to eradicate the plague of impunity is to promptly address the underlying cause - the commission of grave crimes.

Our true success will be the day the perpetrators of mass atrocities everywhere cannot escape justice and victims anywhere know they will not be deprived of it.

The State of Palestine is proud to say that it has stood, with you, on the right side of history. We are equally proud that long before international circumstances allowed Palestine to become a party, we actively supported the adoption of the Statute and the creation of the Court when they were still ideas and clauses under heated debate.

I close by reiterating that Palestine will continue to work tirelessly to ensure the implementation of and respect for universal values, as they are enshrined in international norms. We will continue to uphold our most cherished shared value: justice is the one true cornerstone of this Court and for which the Statute was designed to achieve and protect. Together, we can make this tool of justice and peace prevail over the arrogance of power and impunity. In doing so, we tell victims worldwide that their individual and collective rights and dignity is also ours.

On this 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute, we say it is no longer enough to reiterate the pledge NEVER AGAIN, we have a duty to honour that pledge.

Thank you