

For Immediate Release

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**Negotiations Affairs Department
Palestine Liberation Organization**

Dr Erakat in response to PM Benjamin Netanyahu's speech at Bar-Ilan University

Chief Palestinian Negotiator Dr Saeb Erakat today said that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech at Bar-Ilan University set further preconditions for negotiations and, in effect, announced Israel's intention to unilaterally dictate a solution, rather than negotiate a peace.

"Benjamin Netanyahu spoke about negotiations, but left us with nothing to negotiate as he systematically took nearly every permanent status issue off the table. Nor did he accept a Palestinian state; instead, he announced a series of conditions and qualifications that render a viable, independent and sovereign Palestinian state impossible," Dr Erakat said.

"He blamed Palestinians for their own occupation, and then imposed a set of preconditions for negotiations that demand Palestinians give up their inalienable rights and surrender their national aspirations for a sovereign and independent Palestinian state."

"He failed to engage with the Arab Peace Initiative and its promise of regional peace. In this sense, his call to meet with Arab leaders was vacuous."

"And he failed to set the stage for negotiations: there was no acceptance of the two-state solution, no announcement of a comprehensive settlement freeze including all natural growth, and no intention to lift all restrictions on Palestinian movement, including an end to Israel's siege on Gaza."

"This speech fell far short of every single one of the benchmarks required of Israel in line with international law and existing agreements, including the Road Map. Palestinians will not be alone in their disappointment over Benjamin Netanyahu's failure to show himself to be a genuine partner for peace."

"Netanyahu demonstrated that he lacks even the most basic understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian struggle for statehood is based on the denial of our fundamental rights and freedoms under occupation, and the outstanding historical grievances of 1948," Dr Erakat concluded.

Contact for more information:

Alex Kouttab (English)
Mobile: +972-598-949-161 | akouttab@nsu-pal.org <<mailto:akouttab@nsu-pal.org>>

Xavier Abu Eid (English and Spanish)
Mobile: +972-598-350-300 | xabueid@nsu-pal.org

Wassim Khazmo (English and Arabic)
Mobile: +972-544-626-980 | wkhazmo@nsu-pal.org