

# *Palestine was primary issue of the Muslim world for the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi*

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As people around the world mourn the tragic death of President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash, we look back at his illustrious life and legacy and how he championed the cause of the oppressed.

One of the causes he staunchly championed was that of Palestine. He minced no words in calling out the Israeli regime's genocidal war against Palestinians and urged the Muslim nations to unite.

Palestine figured prominently on his foreign policy agenda, which was reflected in his speeches.

During the 2021 presidential election, President Raisi would often refer to the issue of Palestine. After taking the helm, he walked the talk and dedicated himself to the cause, following in the footsteps of the founder of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini and Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei – the two personalities he greatly admired.

In his eloquent speeches, he would always mention the issue of Al-Aqsa mosque as the most important issue of the Muslim world and would urge the Muslim nations to keep alive the fight for its liberation.

At his swearing-in ceremony in August 2021, President Raisi termed Iran's support for the oppressed people of Palestine as a clear example of the true friendship of Iranian people for Palestine.

"Despite all the pressures and restrictions imposed against Iran, we are fulfilling our religious and humanitarian duty in defending the rights of Palestinian people and we expect Muslim and Arab countries to play a leading role in this regard," he said at the time.

Only three days after taking the presidential office, President Raisi held an official meeting with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, Islamic Jihad leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah and leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Talal Naji.

In the meetings, he stressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran will always support the Palestinians. "We have never had any doubt about this policy. In our view, Palestine has been, and will be, the first issue of the Islamic world," he was quoted as saying at the time.

He praised the two Palestinian resistance movements for bravely defending the rights of the Palestinian people and said the power to determine the fate of Palestine today lies in the hands of the resistance.

Two days after the start of Operation Al-Aqsa Storm in October last year, President Raisi held important separate telephone conversations with both Haniyeh and Nakhalah, discussing the developments in the besieged Gaza Strip and reaffirming Iran's support for the resistance.

In a message at the time, he said he was confident that Palestinians would come out victorious.

President Raisi invited the world to observe the fact that oppression and injustice exercised against the oppressed Palestinian nation, the continuation of insults and desecration to women and prisoners, and the desecration of holy Quds, the first Qibla of Muslims cannot continue forever.

"Iran supports the Palestinian nation's legitimate defense. The Zionist regime and its backers bear responsibility for endangering the security of the nations of the region, and they must be held to account for this," he asserted at the time.

He also urged Muslim governments to join hands in honestly supporting the Palestinian nation, adding that the Zionist enemy should also know that the balance of power has changed.

At the end of the message, he offered greetings to the resistance forces in the region, from Palestine, Lebanon and Syria to Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen, recalling the efforts made by General Qassem Soleimani, Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in supporting the resistance.

Three days later, President Raisi stated that all the Islamic and Arab countries and all the freedom-seeking people of the world must arrive at a serious convergence and cooperation in the path of stopping the crimes of the Zionist regime against the oppressed Palestinian nation.

He added that Iran will try to achieve that coordination by contacting the leaders of the Islamic countries, and tasked the foreign ministry to arrange the meetings with regional leaders. In the days that followed,

he held talks with the officials of Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Qatar, Oman and other countries, condemning Israeli crimes against people in Gaza and urging strong diplomatic action.

One month after the Israeli regime launched its genocidal aggression, President Raisi was one of the 57 Muslim leaders who attended the extraordinary summit on Palestine in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

Originally, the 22 members of the Arab League were expected to attend the Riyadh summit, but it was later expanded to include the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), consisting of 57 mostly Muslim-majority countries.

Unlike other leaders who attended the meeting, President Raisi minced no words in unequivocally condemning the genocide in Gaza and urged the world community to boycott and prosecute the child-murdering regime, which he said is an "illegitimate child of the US."

"What has happened in the past five weeks in Gaza and parts of the occupied West Bank is a historic source of shame for ethics, law, and humanity," he asserted at the time, urging the OIC to act as a unifying force in order to help the Palestinian people.

President Raisi reiterated Iran's long-standing position on holding a referendum in which all Palestinian Muslims, Jews and Christians, from the river to the sea, including those expelled from those areas, would participate and decide their destiny. During his speech, he also proposed a series of measures against the Israeli regime and in support of Palestine, summarized in ten key points.

The first three points called for an end to the massacre of civilians in Gaza, the complete lifting of the humanitarian blockade, and the immediate withdrawal of the Zionist regime's military from the area.

The next three points dealt with the attitude of the OIC members towards the Zionist regime and called for the suspension of political and economic relations, the designation of the Israeli army as a terrorist organization, and the establishment of an international court to punish Israeli crimes.

The last four points dealt with post-war Gaza, and included the reconstruction of infrastructure in the besieged territory through a fund, as well as humanitarian aid, declaring the date of the bombing of the Arab Al-Ahli Hospital as a day of genocide in the official calendars of Islamic countries, and arming the people of Gaza if the Israel regime's relentless crimes continue.

In November, President Raisi said Israel's brutal crimes in Gaza were the result of frustration because they had suffered a humiliating military defeat and had failed to achieve any of their strategic goals.

He also noted that "killing of women and children does not translate into victory," and those massacres of civilians "created an unprecedented atmosphere of anti-Zionist hatred across the world."

Speaking at a conference on the implementation of the Constitution in early December in Tehran, President Raeisi noted that Iran's support for Gaza and Palestine is in total compliance with the Constitution, which has obligated the Islamic government to back the oppressed.

In the following days, he went on an official visit to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Russia, where, on his initiative, Palestine was one of the main points of discussion. He also discussed the issue with the officials of Egypt, Pakistan, Malaysia and Algeria, strengthening Iran's bilateral relations with these countries.

Addressing the International Conference of Al-Aqsa Strom and Awakening of Human Conscience in January, President Raisi reiterated the importance of Palestine for the Islamic Ummah, calling it also "the first issue of humanity and all the free people of the world."

He quoted the words of Imam Khomeini (RA), describing the issue of Palestine as the first issue of the Islamic world and the liberty of the holy Al-Quds as the priority of the Islamic world.

In another speech, President Raeisi praised the role of resistance movements in Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq, who joined the pro-Palestinian retaliatory operations against the Zionist regime.

He also condemned certain Islamic countries who enjoy clandestine economic relations with the Zionist regime despite the ongoing genocide against Gaza, urging them to change course.

The Iranian leader strongly condemned the U.S. regime for vetoing the UN resolutions that called for a ceasefire in Gaza, describing Washington as the center of the Axis of Evil. He also slammed the Western media for its distorted coverage of the Israeli-American genocide in Gaza.

In March, President Raisi used the occasion of Nowruz to call on his counterparts in regional countries to take practical measures to stop Israeli atrocities against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

In addition, on the occasion of sending Eid Fitr congratulatory messages in April, he called on the leaders of all Islamic countries to engage more strongly in supporting Palestinians.

In the same month, he condemned Western countries who project themselves as protectors of human rights while openly or silently supporting the Israeli regime, calling them accomplices in Zionist crimes.

President Raisi also condemned the brutal crackdown on anti-Zionist student protests in Western universities in recent weeks, especially in the United States.

"Today, thanks to the clean blood of the oppressed martyrs of Gaza, the true face of Western civilization has been revealed more than ever in front of the people of the world, and it has become clear that those who make claims on advocating freedom of speech are not committed to any morality but attempts to preserve their hegemony over others," he said.

At the beginning of May, in a statement marking the occasion of the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, he called upon the world bodies and all the awakened human consciences to help the oppressed Palestinian people of Gaza and provide the grounds for sending humanitarian aid.

A few days later, during his visit to the 35th Tehran International Book Fair, President Raeisi called Iranian writers and artists to depict the conflict between honor and evil in Gaza.

At the 5th International Congress of Imam Reza (AS) held in mid-May, he said that the blood of 15,000 martyred Gaza children is so powerful that it would not only end the Zionist regime but also lead to an end to global injustices.

In his recent official trips, from Sri Lanka to Azerbaijan, President Raisi strived to improve bilateral relations, while emphasizing common positions on the Palestinian issue.

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