

## **Removal of the Israel Embassy in South Africa and suspension of all diplomatic relations with Israel**

Madam Speaker

I wish to start this debate with a famous quote by the late Mohandus Karamchand Gandhiji who said, “an eye for an eye, makes the whole world blind,” end quote.

And the counter claims and accusations of one side against the other, in this conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, personifies Gandhiji’s quote.

Supporters on either side of the conflict, are being blinded by their hatred for each other that they cannot see the human rights violations of the elderly, the women and the children.

There can be no better place in the world to have this debate, than right here in South Africa, in this parliament.

Our experience, our history, and the lessons we have learned from our own divisive past, can become the light that shines across Israel and Palestine, to brighten their path for a long-lasting peaceful solution to the conflict.

If only they will see our light.

We too as South Africans walked a similar path that the Palestinians and Israelis are walking today.

Let us not forget that right here in our own country, the struggle for freedom, self-determination and democracy did not come without much sacrifice and suffering.

There was a time in our past when South Africa was also burning.

Bullets, tear gas and bombs were the currency of the day.

Anger, hate, and revenge permeated our daily lives as the apartheid government, supported by some governments of the world, tried everything in their power to keep us divided as a nation, because it suited their interest to do so.

For decades South Africa was engaged in its own war and millions of us to this day, still suffer the consequences of our unequal past.

It will take many more decades and a few more generations before we can completely rid ourselves of our ugly historical past and build a country where every single family can have a home and a decent job.

Today many of us take our democracy for granted.

We forget that we would not have been here today if the courageous leaders of our country did not start a process of dialogue and a genuine sincere attempt to stop the war and division and start talking peace and prosperity.

Those leaders at CODESA, are the ones who brought us here today.

It was not easy, but there was a genuine willingness to build a better future for all South Africans.

What Israel and Palestine needs right now, is their own CODESA.

This war has to stop.

But it can only stop when the leaders of both sides, are prepared to walk the same road that South Africa did to find peace.

South Africa could have ended in devastation and destruction.

It could have been so much worse.

But our leader, the Great late Tata Nelson Mandela had the courage to say, "take your guns, your knives and your pangas and throw them into the sea."

It took leaders from all sides of our own war, to follow in his footsteps and walk the road to peace.

It is now our turn to say to Israel and Palestine...

**STOP THIS WAR.**

Throw your missiles and bombs into the Mediterranean Sea and start a process of talking about peace and not talking about war.

Madam speaker, no amount of bombs and missiles can solve this conflict.

We as South Africans, all have a collective responsibility to bring them together, not tear them even further apart.

There are innocent women, children, and the elderly, regardless of whether they are Israeli or Palestinian, who are suffering the consequences of the weak leadership that exists in that region.

And the rest of the world are standing, watching, and picking a side.

No good will ever come from that.

It will just perpetuate an endless war that will continue for another 100 years.

Unless the leaders of both sides can start a process of dialogue this conflict will never come to an end and the rest of the world will remain divided on this conflict.

It has to start with them.

That's why WE should be the ones at the forefront of helping the Israelis and Palestinians to find peace.

No other country in the world can claim to have walked the path that we have.

South Africa should be taking the lead role to help them come together.

We should not be picking sides.

It helps nobody.

There can be no reason why Israelis and Palestinians cannot live side by side with each other in a peaceful way, where everyone respects each other's right to dignity and respect for each other's cultural and religious beliefs as well as equality and human rights for all.

Madam speaker, I fear that there are many amongst us, who are now importing the conflict from Israel and Palestine into South Africa.

Those who are supporting either side in this conflict are starting to sow the seeds of hatred in our own country.

We must not allow that to happen.

It is our wish that South Africa will play a more active role in helping the people of Israel and Palestine to find a long lasting solution to this war.

We want to see a return to political dialogue and world leaders must play a meaningful role in promoting this dialogue to bring lasting peace and freedom to the people of Israel and Palestine.

We support the two-state solution that will promote unity and peace amongst both Israelis and Palestinians.

On behalf of the Democratic Alliance, our hearts go out to the millions of people who are suffering the consequences of this war.

IT HAS TO STOP.

I Thank you