



EMBASSY OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN
ROME

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Ambassador Fayiz Khouri's Address to the Foreign Relations Committee/Senate of the Republic of Italy

Honorable President Petrocelli, Excellencies members of the committee,

I am truly honored to address this esteemed committee. My presence here today stands as evidence to the steadfast relationship that our two countries and peoples enjoy. It is an opportunity to reflect and build on our concrete relationship that has been solid for 72 years. I am pleased to present to you my country's point of view on current affairs in the Middle East, issues of concern to us, to you and to the whole world.

Excellencies,

Allow me to start by expressing Jordan's solidarity with Italy During this difficult time, and to pay homage to the fallen victims who succumbed to the Corona Virus. I am here to assure you that Jordan readily stands fast to work closely with Italy in exploring all avenues to maintain both nations' resilience in the face of such a devastating pestilence. Human kind has outlived multiple pandemics in the course of its history, therefore we must band together in order to overcome this menacing phenomenon and many other crises raging across the globe.

Excellencies,

Our world, and the ME in particular, have witnessed plenty of changes in the past 10 years. Governments fell, and countries succumbed to war, while terrorism thrived and spread worldwide like a plague. A plague that took innocent lives in its pursuit of destruction, indifferent to color, creed, or nationality. At the moment we are faced with the unprecedented phenomenon of Covid-19 that has reaped the lives of 100,000's proving that no matter how strong we are, we remain vulnerable in the face of the unknown.

My region has taken the brunt and the lion's share of the ongoing conflagration of conflicts raging at the moment. Jordan, surrounded by conflicts from all sides, has felt and shouldered the burden of those conflicts, it being the security burden, or the refugees, or the economic impacts that arose. But Jordan remained resilient in the face of such strains, and continues to be a beacon of stability in a region ravaged by conflict and war. It is saddening that more complexities are rapidly manifesting in the Middle East.



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The region's deepest wound, the Arab/Israeli conflict, which has been festering for more than 70 years, is at a historic juncture now; namely the looming illegal unilateral Israeli annexation of The Palestinian Jordan Valley and parts of the West bank.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

It is within the realm of fiction to believe that if Israel proceeds with this unilateral annexation, it will bring about peace. It is absurd to believe that this annexation, if implemented, means fulfilling the aspirations of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. On the contrary, it will be detrimental to the two-state solution, bringing about a new reality, the one-state solution; a solution with massive stability and security flaws that will seriously and collectively impact the Israelis before the Palestinians, the whole region, and beyond.

This unilateral "land grabbing" initiative, if implemented, stands contrary to all internationally agreed upon UN resolutions, International law and legitimacy. It is imperative to understand that this annexation stands contrary to Peace, and will have devastating ramifications on the region that will reverberate across all continents, causing more conflict and havoc. It is a recipe for more extremism, and will give birth to a fertile ground upon which terrorist organizations thrive.

Excellencies,

Our credibility as members of the international community is being put to the test. It is incumbent upon us to stand with peace, and champion it at all costs. However peace requires sacrifices and difficult decisions. Currently, Europe has the most potent voice to call for peace. In fact, the peace process {we all recall} was initiated, in Europe, in Madrid. Therefore, it is imperative for Europe to clearly step up to the plate and assist in reviving peace negotiations and bringing them back on track, based on agreed upon International parameters.

Europe has an essential role in our region and should continue to play it by warning against the consequences of the annexation on the peace process. Clear messages need to be delivered to Israel to warn them that this annexation is detrimental to the Israelis, to the Palestinians, to peace in the region, and to the world. A lasting and just peace is a strategic interest for us in the Middle East, and for Europe as well.

It is of utmost vitality to push for peace negotiations where both parties can agree upon a comprehensive, just, and lasting settlement, that would address the legitimate rights of both sides, based upon international law and human rights norms that are enshrined in internationally agreed upon parameters, and not upon the balance of power on the ground. Jordan remains committed to its unwavering position regarding the middle east peace process and the two-state solution which



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represent a strategic Jordanian national interest, and will always be ready to discuss possible ways to relaunch peace negotiations in the Middle East. Though a signatory to a peace agreement with Israel, my country is a party to the ongoing-stalled ME peace process. Many of Jordan's national interests are directly affected with issues like refugees, water, borders, security and Jerusalem, where it was agreed they be discussed and settled at final status negotiations, which have yet to come!

Jordan looks forward to your support in Halting this detrimental annexation, and in working towards achieving the vision of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Another important and urgent matter related to the Palestinian question, that I need to shed light on for your kind attention, is the critical dilemma facing UNRWA, the agency entrusted with the provision of assistance and protection to nearly 5.6 million Palestinian refugees in the Near East. The organization that provides schooling, medical services, social services, food support, among others, is not only facing immense financial shortages, but the Corona Virus pandemic as well. This is compounded on having to operate in areas characterized by being some of the most densely populated in the world. Ceasing support to UNRWA means that more than 500,000 students in the middle east alone will be left without schooling!. The mere fact here is, these students will be stripped from their basic right to education. Throwing this vulnerable segment of the population to the streets means that we are providing extremist organizations, like ISIS, with a rich pool for recruitment, and providing them with a platform to preach their devilish doctrines.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is difficult to look at the Middle East and fail to recognize what Transpired in Iraq and Syria. The battle against ISIS was won, however the war on terrorism is still ongoing. It is vital to look at the progress made in Iraq and not lose sight of sustaining our momentum. Finding a political solution that fulfills the aspirations of all Iraqis is key to winning the war against terror, we are sparing no effort in aiding our Iraqi brethren to achieve this goal, and your continued contribution to these efforts will be invaluable. Italy and Jordan were and always will be strong allies, cooperating through multiple multilateral and bilateral mechanisms we can fight the menace of terrorism and extremism posed by ISIS, and other similar outlaws of Islam.

Syria became an arena for many rivalries among multiple regional and global players, with millions of its people suffering from displacement and taking refuge in neighboring countries. If this wound is not mended, Syria will regress back into war, causing waves upon waves of refugees, and it will not be farfetched if ISIS would thrive again there. It is quite obvious that the Syrian conflict has profoundly affected Jordan. Syrian refugees represent 21% of our population at the moment and The impacts of hosting nearly 1.4 million Syrian refugees on our economy, social coherence, security, health and



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educational systems, have been profound. With only 10% of the refugees living in refugee camps, the impacts are felt in all host communities across the country, and that is the case with other nations that have seen massive waves of refugees as well. We shouldered this burden on behalf of the international community, and we played an integral role in saving the refugees from the horrors of crossing the Mediterranean sea. However, it is unfortunate that international support and assistance to Jordan, which we greatly appreciate, did not meet more than 50% of my country's needs. And you can imagine the impact of this on us.

Libya is another fellow Arab country suffering from the tribulations of war, it is on the brink of collapse, we cannot stand idle and watch the implosion of another state. It is of utmost importance to inspire peace into this war-torn country and bring stability to its people where they can fulfill their aspirations as a united nation. A peaceful solution negotiated by the warring Libyan parties under the UN principles is the only solution we foresee bringing hope to end the ongoing struggle and destruction in Libya, which has been felt throughout the African continent and across Arabia and the Mediterranean. And I am certain Italy shares this vision with us.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

I would like to conclude my remarks today by reemphasizing the issues at hand. Standing against the unilateral annexation by Israel and putting traction in the wheels of a peace process based upon the two-state solution, and the establishment of an independent viable contiguous Palestinian State living in peace, side by side with Israel, based on the June 5, 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Palestine and Israel, should be living in peace with all countries in the region. Jordan will continue to work with Italy, and all other international partners to relaunch serious and effective negotiations that would bring us the comprehensive and just peace we all seek, in line with international law and the relevant UN resolutions and parameters. And I call on you to strongly support such an endeavor, as it is not only a Middle Eastern priority, but indeed an Italian, a European, and a global one. Syria, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Refugees, Anti-terrorism, Economic cooperation- including East Med gas, are strategic issues that Jordan and Italy clearly share common visions on. We need to seek a bird's eye-view regarding all these troubling issues, and work collectively in order to generate lasting solutions. Solutions that achieve stability, sustainable economic and human development, equality, fairness and above all Human dignity.

I thank you for your attention and would be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have.