



MEMO International Conference:
Palestine & Latin America in the 21st century

Crimes against humanity cannot be forgotten

Address by HE Roberto Calzadilla Sarmiento

MIDDLE EAST MONITOR

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Images: *Israeli security forces try to stop a Palestinian protester from placing the national flag on the fence of al-Barak building, near al-Aroub Palestinian refugee camp, just north of Hebron on May 30, 2015, during a demonstration against the sale of the building to an Israeli. Photo by Mamoun Wazwaz*

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HE Roberto Calzadilla Sarmiento



Roberto Sarmiento is the current Bolivian Ambassador to the United Kingdom. He has previously served as Bolivia's Ambassador to the Netherlands and Portugal, and was nominated to guide the work of the Department of Europe, Asia, America, Africa and Oceania and the Department of Summits at the Bolivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Between 2000 and 2004, he served as a Permanent Representative to the United Nations International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

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HE Roberto Calzadilla Sarmiento

Already in 2008 President Morales issued a strong diplomatic condemnation of the military operations which ended with more than 1,500 dead and houses totally destroyed. Later on, in 2009, President Morales together with the government broke diplomatic relations with Israel on the 13 January 2009. At that moment I was the ambassador in the Netherlands and non-resident ambassador to Israel.

With Israel we have had very good relations for many years, after the world war Bolivia received about 30,000 Israelis who came to Bolivia, we were quite open. This was the situation that President Morales said I want to report that Bolivia has good relations with Israel but against the serious acts of acts on life and humanity, Bolivia broke diplomatic relations with Israel. Israel should comply with the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity committed against the people of Palestine.

Later on, we watched the events that Senator David mentioned regarding the region's response to the massacres occurring in Gaza. Last year, Bolivia demanded the Security Council and the international lobby meet and issue strongest words to stop the Israeli military aggression against Palestine, we demanded they take responsibility to stop the construction of the famous wall and we demanded to stop illegal settlements and we demanded to release Palestinian prisoners we demand the full respect of the Geneva Conventions and the human rights in the Rome Statute should be fulfilled.

We demanded also the issuing of sanctions against Israel and the ceasing of the aggression itself. But also to end the occupation

and once again Bolivia stated that we support and bring our full solidarity to have a sovereign and independent Palestinian state. So you see the manifestations of the different sides came very strong although in most of the cases we had, in Latin America also, good relations with Israel. Certainly perhaps one point also to mention is while we were chairing the G77 last year there was also a venting of very strong condemnation and a call for the total withdrawal of Israel's occupying power.

So I believe that the voice of the south, the voice of Latin America and the Caribbean has been steadily stronger to condemn all these *[inaudible]* which puts the people of Palestine in a situation of apartheid. Certainly Bolivia has already called, for instance, for a committee for the rights of the Palestinian people and we recognised the State of Palestine in 2011. And certainly we have also been, as many other countries, formalising these diplomatic relations with Palestine which is quite important.

In this sense also we have to say that Bolivia has a very strong standing and concerns about the exploitation by Israel by occupying its natural resources. Certainly we are very aware of the harming effects of Israel's settlements and the illegal construction of the wall on the Palestinian resources. This is against the solution which has been forwarded by the media which is the right to water and these principles which are already in international law are seriously breached by Israel and certainly this is something that Bolivia, together with other members of the international community, is condemning.

We have been expressing our deep concern at the extensive destruction by Israel of agricultural land and plantations of those occupied including the uprooting of large amounts of fruit trees and the destruction of farms and houses, which has a direct environmental and economic impact. We have also been expressing concern about the rise of destruction caused by Israel of vital infrastructure including plants, electricity networks, and particularly the Gaza Strip during the military operations last year, which breach the human rights to water and I've mentioned before has been *[inaudible]* by the national state of Bolivia.