



PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's
Address to the 74th Session of the
United Nations General Assembly

SEPTEMBER 24, 2019



PRESIDENCY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
**DIRECTORATE OF
COMMUNICATIONS**



74TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN'S
ADDRESS TO THE 74TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY



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For many years, I have been saying from this rostrum that we cannot leave the fate of humanity to the discretion of a handful of countries. Today I emphasize once again that the

“World is bigger than five.”

Freedom for *all...*

peace for *all...*

prosperity for *all...*

justice for *all...*

a peaceful *and*

safe future for *all...*

With its active and humanitarian foreign policy, Turkey embraces the whole world and all of humanity, and strives to find fair solutions to pressing problems. It is no coincidence that Turkey became the world's most generous country in terms of humanitarian assistance and home to the largest refugee community in the globe. I urge all countries present in this hall today to support our policies and initiatives, which rest firmly on justice, morality and conscience.



The world faces today many problems and challenges, which stem from injustice on a global scale. Rumi, the great thinker of our civilization, once described justice as “the distribution of rights and responsibilities among people” and “giving everyone their due.” Obviously, neither rights nor responsibilities are distributed as they should in the world today. Injustice, in turn, breeds instability, power struggles, crises and waste.

Mr. President,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished Delegates;
I respectfully greet you on behalf of myself and my nation.

I would like to thank Ms. [María Fernanda] Espinosa for her successful work over the past year.

I wholeheartedly congratulate Mr. [Tijjani] Muhammad-Bande for taking over the General Assembly's presidency.

May the 74th session of the General Assembly bring peace and prosperity to the world and all of humanity.

Esteemed Delegates,

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Rumi, the great thinker of our civilization, once described justice as “the distribution of rights and responsibilities among people” and “giving everyone their due.”

Obviously, neither rights nor responsibilities are distributed as they should in the world today.

Injustice, in turn, breeds instability, power struggles, crises and waste.

The organization, under whose roof we are today, was established after World War II to eradicate injustice.

Yet the international community is gradually losing its ability to find lasting solutions to pressing problems, including terrorism, hunger, poverty and climate change, that threaten its own future.

The 74th session's theme, *Galvanising multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion*, is therefore fitting.

What really matters, however, is what can achieve together.

It is unacceptable that part of the world enjoys high living standards and leads luxurious lives, while famine, misery and illiteracy haunt the rest.

That over two billion people live in below the poverty threshold, and close to one billion under the hunger line, as the lucky few exchange views on digital technology, robots, artificial intelligence and obesity, is devastating.



That over two billion people live in below the poverty threshold, and **close to one billion under the hunger line**, as the lucky few exchange views on **digital technology, robots, artificial intelligence and obesity, is devastating.**

We cannot ignore the fact that none of us is safe unless all of us are safe.

I have been saying for years that we cannot afford to place humanity's fate into the hands of a small group of nations.

Today, in your presence, I say again: *The world is bigger than five!*

It is high time we change our mentality, institutions, and rules.

The inequality between nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear nations alone suffices to throw the world into disbalance.

It bothers us, like everyone else, that weapons of mass destruction are used as leverage in every crisis instead of being eliminated entirely.

Nuclear power must be off-limits to all parties, or free for any nation to obtain.

Let us, for the sake of humanity's peaceful future, solve this problem without delay on the basis of justice.

At a time when air pollution kills thirteen people every minute and global warming threatens the world's future, we do not have the luxury of staying indifferent.

First and foremost, we must improve the capabilities and effectiveness of the United Nations.

Specifically, we must immediately reform the United Nations Security Council in line with the principles of justice and fairness.

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First and foremost, we must improve the capabilities and effectiveness of the United Nations. **Specifically, we must immediately reform the United Nations Security Council in line with the principles of justice and fairness.**

The Third African Union-Turkey Cooperation Summit, which Turkey will host in 2020, will represent another concrete manifestation of that policy.

I urge all countries present in this hall today to support our policies and initiatives, which rest firmly on justice, morality and conscience.

Esteemed Delegates,

Today, Syria is a region that hurts humanity's conscience – an embodiment of global injustice.

The regime and terrorist groups, together with the forces encouraging them, are desperate to perpetuate the conflict that has plagued the country since 2011.

The time has come to end the Syrian crisis, which claimed nearly one million victims, displaced more than twelve million people and forced half of them to flee the country.

The Daesh threat hurt Turkey more than any other country. In addition to harassing our nation's borders, the group struck Turkey's heart by carrying out suicide bombings in multiple cities, resulting in hundreds of casualties. Likewise, Turkey was the first country to deal a heavy blow to Daesh in Syria. By launching Operation Euphrates Shield, we killed approximately 3,500 Daesh terrorists, paving the way to the organization's ultimate collapse. *At the same time, Turkey remains the world's top provider of humanitarian aid per capita. We host 5 million asylum seekers who have fled violence, starvation and persecution. In other words, the number of Syrians within Turkey's borders amounts to half of New York City's entire population.*

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Turkey has also been on the forefront of international efforts to identify and stop terrorists through entry bans and deportations.

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We host 5 million asylum seekers who have fled violence, starvation and persecution.

To put things in perspective, the refugee community in Turkey is bigger than the population of 29 individual U.S. states.

Some 3.65 million of all asylum seekers in Turkey hail from Syria.

In other words, the number of Syrians within Turkey's borders amounts to half of New York City's entire population.

Over the last eight years, we spent \$40 billion for asylum seekers.

365,000 refugees have since relocated to the parts of Syria that we have made safe.

Today, almost half of the Syrian refugee community in Turkey is under the age of eighteen.

Meanwhile, the number of Syrian children born on Turkish soil is nearly 500,000.

We provide them with housing as well as public services including education and health care.

Unfortunately, the world was quick to forget about millions of victims, their journeys to survival, and the souls that perished in the dark waters of the Mediterranean or up against security forces on national borders.

We, on the other hand, have not forgotten. Nor will we ever forget the image of babies like Alan Kurdi, whose dead bodies washed up on our shores.

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In the first eight months of 2019 alone, Turkey has rescued some 32,000 irregular migrants from the sea.

During the same period, we sent back 58,000 irregular migrants, other than Syrians, to their countries.

Still, together with arrivals from other regions, our country hosts five million refugees.

Sadly, Turkey was left alone to engage in its selfless efforts to help asylum seekers.

There have been no returns to areas under regime, PKK-YPG, or Daesh control in Syria.

The areas liberated and secured by Turkey are the only places where Syrians returned after fleeing the country.

There are three important issue that we need to address in order to end the humanitarian crisis in Syria today.

First, we must ensure that the Constitutional Committee, which we consider key to preserving Syria's territorial integrity and political unity, can function effectively and efficiently.

Early last week, we made a significant accomplishment together with Russia and Iran at the Ankara Summit.

When a lasting political solution is found in Syria, the country's territorial integrity will be automatically guaranteed.

The second important issue is to prevent potential massacres in Idlib and to stem the next wave of migration, which could involve four million people.

Despite some setbacks, the agreement that we made with Russia in Sochi on this issue remains intact.

Turkey has neither the patience nor the resources to receive another wave of refugees.

Therefore, we expect all countries to support Turkey's efforts to promote safety and stability in Idlib.

Last but not least, we must eliminate the terrorist organization PKK-YPG in the East of the Euphrates river, which occupies a quarter of Syria's territory – a group that some seek to legitimize under the name Syrian Democratic Forces.

There will be no lasting solution to the Syrian question until we adopt an approach that keeps an equal distance from all terrorist organizations.

Negotiations are underway with the United States to set up a safe zone in Syria.

Our initial intention is to establish a 30-kilometer deep, 480-kilometer long peace corridor and, with the international community's support, relocate up to two million Syrians there.

If we can extend the safe zone's depth to the Deir ez Zor-Raqqa line, the number of Syrians willing to return from Turkey, Europe and other parts of the world to their own lands could reach three million.

Turkey has already started making preparations for this effort, which we are determined to see through.

At the same time, our country is planning to host an international conference with Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan.

We also attach great importance to the success of the Global Refugee Forum, which will take place in Geneva in December and be co-chaired by Turkey.

We believe that the United Nations can lead the effort to organize a donor conference in order to facilitate the relocation of refugees to safe areas.



The Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, which the United Nations adopted last year, must be effectively implemented as well.

By promoting Syria's stability and peace on the basis of rights, justice, and conscience, we can also weaken the threat that Daesh and PKK pose on neighboring Iraq.

From here, the United Nations General Assembly hall, I call on the world to take initiative and support our efforts to end the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Esteemed Delegates,

In addition to the tragedies that caused by the Syrian crisis, the Mediterranean basin faces many problems due to recent developments in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Negotiations have been underway for 50 years, yet the Cyprus issue has not been resolved due to the Greek Cypriots' uncompromising stance.

The Greek Cypriot side pursues an unjust and unfair policy of imposition, under which they refuse to share political power and wealth with the Turkish Cypriots.

Under international agreements, Turkey is a guarantor of the Turkish Cypriot people, with whom it has deep historical and cultural ties.



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Those claiming that the Cyprus issue can only be resolved under the condition of “zero troops, zero guarantees” are clearly acting in bad faith.

Turkey will continue its efforts until a solution, which safeguards the safety and rights of the Turkish Cypriot community, can be found.

We believe that the Eastern Mediterranean’s energy reserves constitute an important opportunity for cooperation if we all adopt a “win-win” approach.

Unfortunately, despite our reasonable stance, some countries take unilateral steps to turn the issue of energy resources into an area of conflict.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, we will protect the legitimate rights and interests of both the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot people to their full extent.

However, we will remain open to all proposals seeking to promote cooperation and a fair distribution of resources.

In Libya, another critical part of the Mediterranean, we work towards a democratic government, which reflects the people’s free will, and promote security and stability.

Libya’s political and economic empowerment will be a source of relief for North Africa and Europe.

Respect for the Libyan people’s choices is key to resolving pressing problems.

Interventions in Yemen and Qatar have had serious humanitarian and economic consequences.

All parties are eager to resolve the regional crisis, which has escalated due to recent attacks against petroleum facilities, without further delay.

The journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was brutally slaughtered last year, and Mohamed Morsi, Egypt’s first democratically elected president, who died in a courtroom under suspicious circumstances, have become symbols of the serious need for justice and fairness in the region.

We also hope that the debate on Iran’s activities, together with threats against it, will be resolved on a rational basis without delay.



I am asking from the podium of the United Nations General Assembly: **Where are the borders of the State of Israel? Are they the 1948 borders or the 1967 borders? Or are there other borders?**

Esteemed Delegates,

Today, the Palestinian lands under Israeli occupation are among the places where injustice occurs most frequently.

If the footage of the Israeli security forces murdering an innocent Palestinian woman on the street does not bother anyone, then words no longer suffice at this point.

In addition to committing those murders, Israel's current administration disrespects humanity's values, not just international law, through the inhumane blockade of Gaza, the establishment of illegal settlements, and attacks on Jerusalem's historical and legal status.

Turkey's position is clear on this issue.

The only solution is to establish, without delay, a Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the 1967 borders. No other peace plan can be fair, acceptable, or implementable. I am asking from the podium of the United Nations General Assembly: Where are the borders of the State of Israel?

Are they the 1948 borders or the 1967 borders? Or are there other borders?

If the Golan Heights and the settlements in the West Bank, like the rest of occupied Palestinian lands, are not within that state's borders, how is it that Israel can usurp those areas as the world is watching?

Is the purpose of the initiative, called the Deal of the Century, to eliminate the Palestinian state and people?

All members of the international community, starting with the United Nations, must go beyond making promises and provide concrete support to the Palestinian people?

In this regard, it is crucial for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to actively continue its efforts.

Turkey will stand in solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine, as it has done until today.

To ensure a fair and peaceful future for the world, another key issue is that the South Caucasus ceases to be a hotspot.

That Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding areas, which are Azerbaijan's soil, remain under occupation despite past resolutions is unacceptable.

Another issue, to which the international community still does not pay enough attention, is the dispute over Kashmir, which has awaited a solution for 72 years.

The stability and prosperity of South Asia cannot be separated from the Kashmir issue.

To ensure a safe future for the people of Kashmir, together with their Pakistani and Indian neighbors, the dispute must be resolved through dialogue on the basis of justice and fairness, rather than conflict.

Yet another issue, to which the world is indifferent, is the humanitarian tragedy that the Rohingya Muslims experience.

Established under the United Nations, the Independent Commission of Inquiry documented the existence of a "genocidal intent" the events taking place in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

Turkey will continue to take steps towards ensuring the safety and safeguarding the fundamental rights of the Rohingya people, and carry on humanitarian aid activities that it launched when the violence broke out.

40 years of invasions, violence and terrorist activities in Afghanistan caused serious problems at the global level.

It is time for this ancient region to enjoy peace and security.



To this end, the international community must live up to its responsibilities and make an effort.

Esteemed Delegates,

The rise of racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and Islamophobia is among the most serious threats against global peace and stability.

Muslims ranks first among communities facing hate speech, discrimination, and insults directed at their sacred values.

The terror attack, which took place in Christchurch, New Zealand last March, is the most striking manifestation of this trend.

Acts of terrorism against Christians in Sri Lanka and the Jewish community in the United States are just as wrong as the terror attack against Muslims in New Zealand.

Many people are responsible for turning this disease almost into insanity.

Populist politicians, who encourage such tendencies to win votes, and those seeking to justify hate speech under the pretext of free speech bear more responsibility than others.

Everyone approaching Muslims, among others, with ignorance and prejudice, and alienating Muslims pave the way for the rise of such twisted movements.

Only common will and shared efforts can overcome this scourge.

Statesmen and stateswomen have a duty to react to such behavior with inclusive, tolerant statements and by taking concrete measures.



The rise of racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and Islamophobia is among the most serious threats against global peace and stability. Muslims ranks first among communities facing hate speech, discrimination, and insults directed at their sacred values. And I hereby request the designation by the United Nations of March 15th, the day when the Christchurch attack was carried out, as “International Day for Solidarity against Islamophobia.”

The Honorable UN Secretary General has recently introduced an “Action Plan for Safeguarding Religious Sites” developed by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, a UN initiative which Turkey has shown a political leadership for its establishment.

We hope that this Action Plan will help raise awareness on this issue.

And I hereby request the designation by the United Nations of March 15th, the day when the Christchurch attack was carried out, as “International Day for Solidarity against Islamophobia.”

I also invite the Islamic world to start a thorough assessment of all the issues, particularly the Sunni-Shia divide, which have provided so far the ground for its internal conflicts as well as served as the political instruments for power conflicts.

Esteemed Delegates,

Turkey is a rightful successor to the collective heritage of both Eastern and Western civilizations owing to its geographical location at the center of the ancient world.

Hence, we are obliged to follow closely the latest developments in both worlds, assume responsibility and take initiative.

We will continue to fulfill our responsibilities towards humanity as being a country affected directly or indirectly by all the crisis that I could only point out some of them today.

A United Nations, and in particular a Security Council, to be reformed on a fair, moral and conscience basis, will give hope to humanity once again.

Turkey stands ready to promote and support each steps taken towards this direction.

With this understanding, we are willing to assume the Presidency of the 75th United Nations General Assembly.

We have nominated for this important post Ambassador Volkan Bozkır, Former Minister of European Union and current Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

We have full confidence that Mr. Bozkır, an experienced diplomat and politician, will shoulder this responsibility successfully.

And I believe that you will not spare your support to him.

Istanbul, the biggest city in Turkey, currently hosts various UN regional presences, and we would like to turn Istanbul even a bigger regional and global hub for the United Nations.

The United Nations Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries entered into service last year in the vicinity of Istanbul.

We also appreciate the positive and encouraging reactions that we have received so far to our proposal to host a United Nations Youth Center in Istanbul, which I have offered last year from this very rostrum.

The members to the UN Group of Friends of Mediation that we co-chair have reached 59.

We have carried this UN initiative also into the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

I believe that it is within our reach to find fair, equitable and conscientious solutions to all global challenges that we face.

I would like to conclude my remarks with the following wishes.



Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY



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