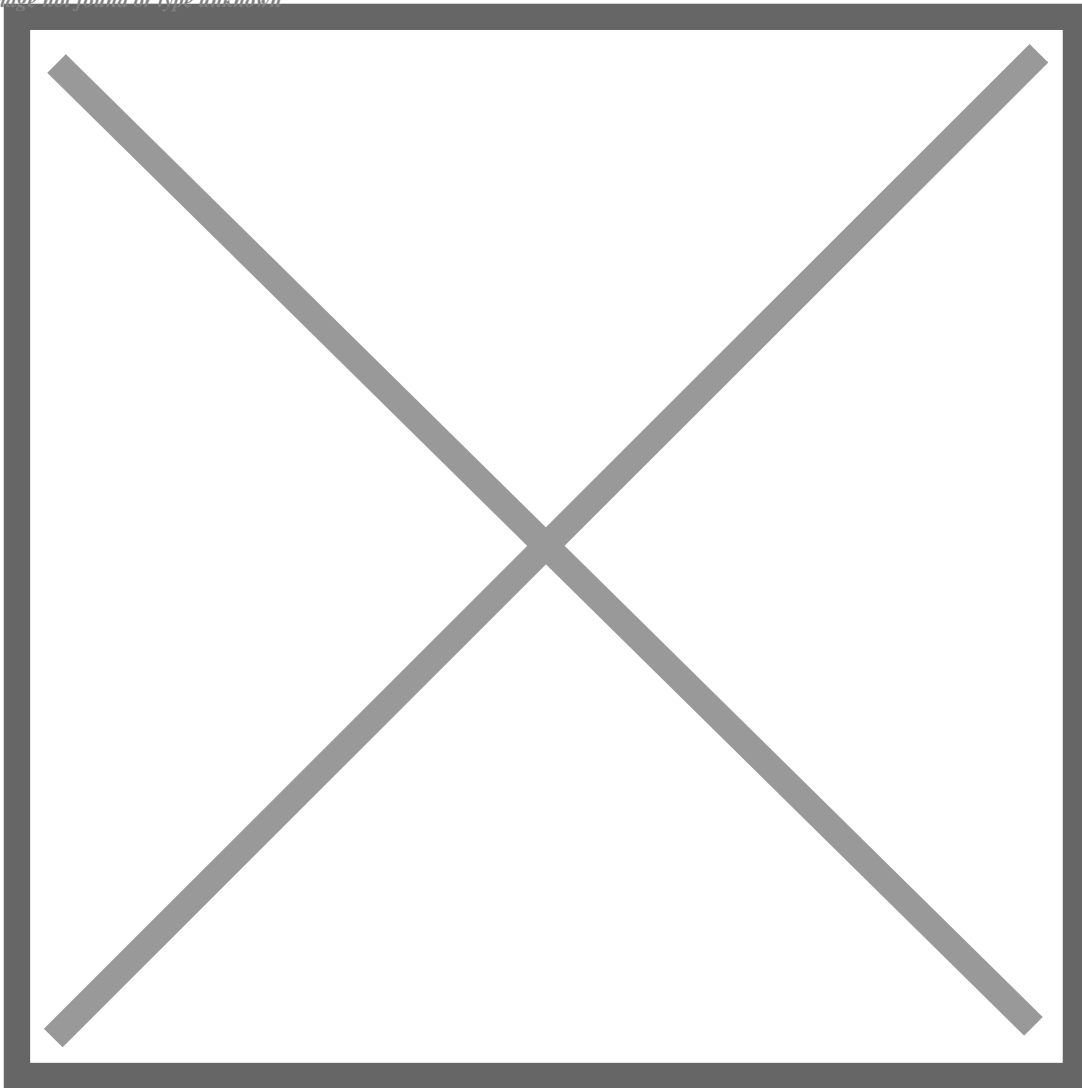


Fidel and the just cause of the Palestinian people

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By María Josefina Arce

Fidel Castro imbued the Cuban Revolution with great humanism, solidarity and made the defense of justice, peace and just causes one of his essential principles, including support for the Palestinians' right to their land and to a sovereign and independent state.

Today, when violence has escalated in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the words pronounced by the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution in every international tribune, in which he denounced the crimes of the Zionist regime of Israel against the Palestinians, take on special validity.

"Put an end as soon as possible to the genocide of the Palestinian people? Protect the basic right to life of its citizens, its young people and its children. Respect their right to independence and peace...", he said in September 2001, in Durban, South Africa, during the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

Much earlier, in 1979, before the plenary session of the UN General Assembly, Fidel condemned Israel's policy of aggression, colonialism and expansionism.

The historic leader of the Cuban Revolution was tireless in his denunciation of the injustice committed against the Palestinians and in his support for the struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Cuba was one of the first countries to recognize the Palestine Freedom Organization, constituted in 1964, and the Palestinian politician and leader Yasser Arafat, who maintained a close friendship with the Cuban leader, visited our territory for the first time in 1974.

Under Fidel's guidance, the Caribbean nation's support to that people would not be limited to constant denunciation, but would also materialize over the decades in solidarity aid.

Many Palestinians have been able to make their dream of becoming doctors come true on Cuban soil. In the Latin American School of Medicine, born at the initiative of the Commander in Chief, young people from that people have been trained.

To date, 104 Palestinian health professionals have graduated, and currently 200 more are being trained in that institution, 78 of them are from the Gaza Strip, besieged by the Zionist regime.

Every year, Cuba grants around 50 scholarships to the Palestine Liberation Organization for young people from the occupied territories and refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

Fidel instilled in us the defense of the Palestinian cause. He always advocated a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the creation of two States and guaranteeing the right to self-determination of that people.

The Palestinians will never forget the support and solidarity of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, and as they have said, he will always be present in the memory of that people.

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