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She held this speech during the gathering of March 30th 2025 in Vienna.

While we are standing here, Israel is continuing smashing relentlessly Gaza and the occupied West Bank, probably bombing strategic locations in Syria and Lebanon, all this in the effort to reshape the Middle East, making it a safe place for it to exist with as little Palestinians as possible. For this great purpose, human lives are meaningless, more accurately human lives are an obstacle, be it the lives of tens of thousands of Palestinians or the lives of a couple of dozens Israeli hostages. For the present government, human lives just do not matter.

The demolition of Gaza and the destruction of Palestinian lives there and in the West Bank is happening with the approval of most of the western world. Most notable is the blind support of Germany and Austria for every action Israel takes. When it concerns Israel Austria abandoned its neutrality so it can blindly support of the ongoing atrocities which are inflicted by Israel.

This makes me wonder, why Austria, who seemingly has no economical profits from the present situation, supports this Genocidal war and the Ethnic cleansing, which, as we were made to believe, are drastically contrary to its values, the western humanistic values.

Today I chose to present two possible answers: First, Israel, despite being in the middle east, is considered a sort of European country, part of the “European Family.” It participates in the Euroleague, Eurovision, and shares with Europe its liberal western values. Note, when Theodor Herzl, wrote about the need for a state for the Jews in Palestine, as opposed to, for example, in Argentina, he argued that Europe will benefit from such a state, as it will be a part of “a fortified wall against the barbaric east.” The second reason is that Austria is driven and controlled by guilt, by its share of responsibility for the Holocaust, and therefore it is committed to the State of Israel and

believes that it should be responsible for its safe existence. I want to address these two topics.

To my knowledge freedom, equality, and of course the right to live are fundamental values, which, according to the belief of many, can be implemented almost solely in a democratic regime. So, freedom, equality, the right to live and democracy are the values that Israel is supposed to share with Europe as a moral basis for an alliance with it.

So, Austria – please take note: Israeli governments have never embraced any of these values. As an Israeli who believed for many years, as most of the Israeli people still do, that we are the only democracy in the Middle East and the IDF is the most moral army in the world, I must sadly admit that I was very wrong. We are not and never have been, neither democratic nor moral. I want to briefly address these four values which my country does not uphold: freedom, equality, the right to live and democracy.

Freedom – immediately after the establishment of Israel, the government imposed a military rule on its Palestinians citizens, who in 1948 were 15% of the population; over time they have become more than 20%. The military rule placed tight controls on all aspects of their life. The government adopted the "Emergency Defense Regulations" enacted by the British Mandate, regulations which allowed it to take actions such as confiscating property, demolishing buildings, expelling residents, expropriating land, and restricting movement – all of which were executed by the governments quite extensively. The fact that 15% of the population is subjected to state oppression, 15% are under military rule – and that before the occupation of 1967- goes against any concept of freedom.

Equality – the military rule ended in December 1966. Soon after, in June '67 it was once again applied, this time on the Palestinian population in Gaza and the West Bank. But for the Palestinians citizens of Israel the military rule was over. Finally, the Palestinians could be citizens in the state and enjoy full equal rights. Right?

Wrong! The Israeli bureaucracy has many ways to continue having the Palestinians citizens under tight control, to put it mildly. Just a few examples: The government rarely grants Palestinians building permits. So, to provide roofs for their growing families, they

are forced to build illegally. Occasionally, by court order, the authorities demolish the illegally built houses because they were built illegally without a permit. Kafka could not have invented a more convoluted bureaucratic mess. Mind you, not a single city was built for the Palestinians in the 77 years of Israel's existence, so they have to crowd into the few remaining Arabic cities and villages; meanwhile we the Jews, have built an entire state for ourselves, a real flourishing modern empire. By the way, in Israel people talk naturally about "Arabic cities," as if such segregation is normal. Well, in Israel it is.

Another example for the inequality is the financing of schools: In Israel, there are different factions in the education system: general secular state education, the state religious, the ultra-Orthodox, and the Arab education system. Each faction is financed not according to its needs, not according to its achievements, not even according to its contribution to society, but according to its political power. I do not need to tell you which one is drastically underfinanced. An interesting fact: despite the immense discrimination within the education system, despite being so meagerly financed, in the state health system 25% of the Doctors are Palestinians, more so nurses and physiotherapists and pharmacists are about 50%. Just imagine how Israel could have flourished were it a real democracy with equal rights and opportunities for all.

The right to live – I am sure that you immediately think of Gaza; maybe also of the West Bank which is going through Gazafication. But I want to continue to focus on the Palestinians citizens of Israel within the '67 borders, to focus on the "Classical Israel", the one that was established in 1947 after the UN resolution.

Today is the Land Day, the day in which we commemorate the six citizens that were killed in a demonstration only because they were Palestinians. On March 30th 1976, Israeli police killed six Palestinian citizens of Israel while they were protesting Israel's expropriation of thousands of dunams of Palestinian land for Judaizing the Galilee, i.e. turning the Galilee more Jewish. This was after the military rule was removed. Six citizens killed while protesting the robbing of their own land by their own government.

Much later, on the first week of October 2000, 13 Palestinian citizens were killed during the heated protests of Ariel Sharon's violation of the Status Quo on the Temple

Mount. This is the same Sharon who enable the massacre in Sabra and Shatila in 1983. We have had in Israel quite a few highly agitated, violent demonstrations, led by ultra-orthodox or settlers for example, but only Palestinians are shot to death. Yet I can recall two Jewish Israeli demonstrators who were murdered, Emil Grunzweig, while protesting the Sabra and Shatila massacre, and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin; both were killed by nationalist messianic Jews. It is worth mentioning that in a demonstration against the government after the Sabra and Shatila massacre participated 200,000 Israelis; back then in was about 5% of the population. The Israel nation has gone a long way since, unfortunately to the very wrong direction.

The right to live is being violated in yet another extremely disturbing and original way, in which law and order are being denied from the Palestinian population. The Israeli police do not investigate crimes in the Israeli Palestinian society. The same police which eliminated with great success the Jewish crime families, the Israeli Jewish Mafia, which transferred its businesses to the Arabs, does not put any effort to solve crimes in the Palestinian society within Israel. The rate of murders and killing of innocent bystanders as a result of the spread of crime is outrageous; sadly, this serves well the extreme right-wingers: Not only are the Arabs killing themselves, but now we can also point at their barbarism.

I haven't mentioned the brutal oppression of the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza; there are many available sources which provide comprehensive and reliable information. As I have mentioned before, I want to highlight what is going on within the internationally agreed borders of the only democracy in the Middle East.

What happened after '67? The annexation of East Jerusalem without giving its citizens the basic right to vote. If they leave the country, they lose their status and the right to return to Jerusalem; the building of illegal settlements and the crawling, which is not crawling any longer annexation of the West Bank; the siege of Gaza which is not a siege any longer but a brutal destruction of the region and its people, and lately the rapid rise to power of the Jewish fascist movements and their control over the current fascist government. This is how post '67 looks like.

Now I want to ask, what of all I have just described complies with liberal western values? The denial of basic civil rights, the denial of freedom or the denial of the right to live? What kind of democracy is the west, Austria included, supporting here? What kind of a “Fortified wall against the eastern Barbarians” Israel is?

We need to admit and remember – that nothing of what Israel has done and is still doing could have been done without the assistance and approval of the USA, Europe and the loyalty of Germany and Austria to Israel. From the USA I have never had much expectation: Destroying regions seems to be their cup of tea. But from post-war Europe I could have expected more, especially as they have such serious responsibility in creating this conflict.

And now a few words to Austria and Germany who carry with them the awful responsibility for the holocaust. I am not trying to trivialize your feeling of guilt towards the Jewish people, my people, my family, I rather wish to point out, that one can remember the past, feel guilty about it, carry on with reconciliation, and still be able to criticize its former victim and present ally, especially when it inflicts an immeasurable trauma to another people. The memory, the guilt, and the reconciliation should not prevent Austria from calling Israel to order when it commits the worst crimes against humanity to its Palestinian neighbors.

Austria, you can feel responsible to the well-being of the Jews here and in Israel; but enabling Israel to continue with the destruction of the middle east under the pretext of its self-defense is irresponsible and dangerous! Israel’s actions are dangerous to itself and to Jews around the world, including here in Austria. If you cannot assist in stopping the bloodshed, at least don’t be an accomplice to it.

“No one is free until everyone is free” applies to every society and Israel is not excluded. So, if anyone cares about the freedom and safety of Israel, the state of the Jews, they should help it to free itself from the oppression and occupation of Palestine, so all Palestinians will also be safe and free.

I want to finish with a quote from my dear friend Osama Zatar, “Standing up for peace in today's world means being radical”. We, the radicals who adhere to dialogue and

political solutions, are a painful minority right now. Nevertheless, we are a strong resilient core and we have partners. In Israel-Palestine there are dozens of organizations or movements, some are joint Palestinian Israeli movements, others are either Palestinian or Israeli, there are women organizations, religious and many others, and I know that there are quite a few here in Europe. They all share the vehement opposition to the ongoing war and bloodshed, and they all share the search for a path leading to a just sustainable peace in the Middle East which will be achieved through political means. It will be hard work, almost against all odds. Nevertheless, we must keep going, no matter how long the road is and how heavy the burden. There is no other land for both peoples in Israel Palestine and there is no other way. So let us join in our struggle so that we will not have to go through it alone.