



## agriculture & rural development

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**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

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### **REMARKS BY MEC CYRIL XABA ON THE OCCASION OF WELCOMING THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTIONARY - LEILA KHALED, ON 9<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2015**

Program Director

Our honoured guest Leila Khaled

Second General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, Comrade  
Solly Mapaila

Provincial Secretary of Cosatu, Edwin Mkhize

All Active and Concerned supporters of the Palestinian Struggle

Comrades, Ladies and Gentlemen

I bring you fraternal greetings from the Provincial Chairperson, Cde Senzo Mchunu and the entire leadership of the ANC in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. I want to thank the Young Communist League for giving us the rare honour of welcoming one of our generation's most inspirational revolutionaries, Leila Khaled.

As young men and women organised under the banner of the ANC Youth League, your story as the first woman to hijack a plane in the name of a revolutionary cause, inspired our own commitment to our own liberation. I have to confess that this was tinged with romanticism as you cut a dashing figure as a young revolutionary.

However, your visit to South Africa, is helping to debunk some of that romanticism and reminds us that the Palestinian Liberation Struggle is about oppression and the pain and suffering of a people who had been dispossessed of their land.

Reading an interview that you did with the Sunday Tribune that was published yesterday, I was particularly moved by the headline that your dream is to go back home. Those of us who are home can never imagine that sense of being perpetually in exile and being homeless. Our own comrades who lived in exile are beginning to tell their stories of loneliness and yearning for their home country. You reminded us that the Palestinian people have been refugees from their own homeland for 66 years.

There are generations who know no other life than that of living within the confines of refugee camps. There are grandparents, parents children and even their children who have grown up in small carved-out spaces surrounded by barbed wire all their lives.

It is difficult to imagine such dispossession.

As South Africans, we too had our land taken away and this should make us empathetic and understanding of your struggle. You supported us in our fight for freedom, we need to support you.

We welcome your visit and I would like to thank the South African Arm of the Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement for inviting you.

I look forward to hearing what you have to say because there is a depth and complexity to your struggle that you said the world has not fully grasped.

My challenge to the BDS, to civil society and to our own political structures like the Young Communist league is to never stop reading, engaging and educating others on issues of world oppression and struggles like that of the Palestinian People. We can never take our own freedom for granted and we have to acknowledge the support of the international community in our own fight for freedom. In turn, we cannot turn our backs on those who are still suffering. We have to show solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters. Remember former President Nelson Mandela's words. He said: "We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians."

Leila Khaled, I welcome you and feel honoured to be in your presence as a person who has never turned her back on injustice and the suffering of her people.