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Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel

September 1, 2010

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Prime Minister Netanyahu and I just had a very productive discussion about our shared efforts to advance the cause of peace between Israelis and Palestinians and throughout the Middle East. I'm going to have more to say about today's meetings not only with Prime Minister Netanyahu, but with the other participants of the talks here in the Rose Garden later this afternoon. But I did want to specifically take some time out to speak to the people of Israel and to the region about the senseless slaughter that took place near Hebron yesterday.

There are going to be extremists and rejectionists who, rather than seeking peace, are going to be seeking destruction. And the tragedy that we saw yesterday, where people were gunned down on the street by terrorists who are purposely trying to undermine these talks, is an example of what we're up against. But I want everybody to be very clear: The United States is going to be unwavering in its support of Israel's security, and we are going to push back against these kinds of terrorist activities.

And so the message should go out to Hamas and everybody else who is taking credit for these heinous crimes that this is not going to stop us from not only ensuring a secure Israel but also securing a longer lasting peace in which people throughout the region can take a different course.

I also want to express the deepest condolences of the American people to the families of those who were gunned down. And I want to thank Prime Minister Netanyahu, during a very difficult time for his country, still being so committed to the cause of peace that he is here with us today.

Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Well, thank you, Mr. President, for expressing what I think is the sentiment of decent people everywhere in the face of this savagery and brutality.

Four innocent people were gunned down and seven new orphans were added by people who have no respect for human life and trample human rights into the dust and butcher everything that they oppose.

I think that the President's statement is an expression of our desire to fight against this terror. And the talks that we had, which were, indeed, open, productive, serious in the quest for peace, also centered around the need to have security arrangements that are able to roll back this kind of terror and other threats to Israel's security. That is a fundamental element, an important foundation of the peace that we seek and work for.

And I appreciate, Mr. President, your efforts to advance this peace for us and for our neighbors, for our region, and I think we can say, for the world.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you.

And let me just say that I will be meeting with President Abbas this afternoon. He condemned this outrageous attack as well. I have the utmost confidence in him and his belief in a two-state solution in which the people of Israel and the Palestinians are living side by side in peace and security. And so I am also grateful to him for his presence here today.

We've got a lot of work to do. There are going to be those who are going to do everything they can to undermine these talks, but we are going to remain stalwart.

And so to Prime Minister Netanyahu and to Prime Minister—and to President Abbas, as well as to President Mubarak and King Abdullah of Jordan, I am very grateful for their participation. I will have a longer discussion about that this afternoon after my bilateral meetings.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. on the Colonnade at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Yitzhak Ames, Tayla Ames, Kochava Even Chaim, and Avishai Shindler, Jewish settlers who were killed in Hebron on August 31; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and King Abdullah II of Jordan. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Hebrew language transcript of these remarks.

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