

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Isaac Herzog of Israel and an Exchange With Reporters

July 18, 2023

President Biden. Well, Mr. President, welcome back. Welcome back to Washington. Welcome back to the White House, and it's a pleasure to have you.

And you know, we were together in Israel, and we're together again today. We've got a lot to talk about.

And I—you know my love for Israel is deep rooted and long lasting. And as I—as I've often said: If there wasn't an Israel, we'd have to invent one. And—but 75 years.

President Herzog. It's amazing.

President Biden. Seventy-five years. It's hard to believe. Hard to believe I even remember about two-thirds of those. [*Laughter*]

And this is a friendship, I believe, that's just simply unbreakable. Unbreakable. And together, working to bring more stability and integration in the Middle East. And a lot of hard work. We've got a lot more to do, but there's progress.

Last year, we convened the largest gathering of Arabs and Israelis in a decade at the Negev Forum. And we resolved the maritime boundary dispute between Israel and Lebanon, which people thought could never happen. We opened up an airspace for Israel in—over Saudi Arabia and Oman after I had a little visit there. And we brought Israelis and Palestinians together at a political level on the—in—at the—in Aqaba and El Sharm.

President Herzog. Yes.

President Biden. And as I affirmed to Prime Minister Netanyahu yesterday, America's commitment to Israel is firm, and it is ironclad. And we're committed, as well, to ensure that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon.

So we've got a lot to talk about. But, again, welcome.

President Herzog. Thank you, Mr. President. It's wonderful to see you again.

I bring a message of greeting and gratitude on behalf of the people of Israel, the entire nation of Israel, from all sides of the political spectrum, all expressing great friendship and gratitude to you.

As you said, from—it's almost a jubilee—[*laughter*—since you entered politics. And you've always stood by the State of Israel and the people of Israel in so many issues.

And I was pleased to hear about your conversation with Prime Minister Netanyahu, in which you focused on our ironclad military and security cooperation, because there are some enemies of ours that sometimes mistaken the fact that we may have some differences as impacting our unbreakable bond. And I truly believe that had they known how much our cooperation has grown in recent years—and it's achieved new heights—they would not think that way.

I also want to thank you, Mr. President, for pursuing more and more cooperation and integration in the region, for finding and looking for further partners for peace with Israel, and for cooperating on so many regional issues together.

And finally, Mr. President, I know you have mentioned, and you—we will discuss that as well, the internal Israeli situation.

As you know, I'm here, and I'm happy to be here because tomorrow I will be speaking in front of a Joint Session of Congress especially devoted to celebrating Israel's 75th independence. However, of course, my heart and soul is also in Israel in the heated debate which we are going through as a society. It's a heated debate, but it is also a virtue and a tribute to the greatness of Israeli democracy.

And let me reiterate clear—crystal clear: Israeli democracy is sound, strong, and resilient. We are going through pains. We are going through heated debates. We are going through challenging moments. But I truly believe—truly believe—and I will say to you, Mr. President, as I've said it as head of state to the people of Israel: We should always seek to find amicable consensus. And I agree with you on that as well.

I'm pursuing it, even in these very moments, for my people, as much as we can, in order to find solutions and exit out of this crisis properly.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your friendship. And God bless you.

President Biden. Thank you for your friendship. And we've got a lot to talk about. Thank you all very much.

[At this point, several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Israel-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, when will you invite Netanyahu to the White House? Mr. President, when will you invite Netanyahu to the White House?

Q. Mr. President, is Netanyahu invited to the White House?

President Biden. We're talking.

Q. Is Netanyahu invited to the White House?

President Biden. *[Inaudible]*

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 19.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Israel, President Herzog.

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